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CHAPTER I

INTEREST IN CATTLE

I

•233 [241] A PEOPLE whose material culture is as simple as that of the Nuer are highly dependent on their environment. They are pre-eminently pastoral, though they grow more millet and maize than is commonly supposed. Some tribes cultivate more and some less, according to conditions of soil and surface water and their wealth in cattle, but all alike regard horticulture as toil forced on them by poverty of stock, for at heart they are herdsmen, and the only labour in which they delight is care of cattle. They not only depend on cattle for many of life's necessities but they have the herdsman's outlook on the world. Cattle are their dearest possession and they gladly risk their lives to defend their herds or to pillage those of their neighbours. Most of their social activities concern cattle and *cherchez la vache* is the best advice that can be given to those who desire to understand Nuer behaviour.[1]

The attitude of Nuer towards, and their relations with, neighbouring peoples are influenced by their love of cattle and their desire to acquire them. They have profound contempt for peoples with few or no cattle, like the Anuak, while their wars against Dinka tribes have been directed to seizure of cattle and [423] control of pastures. Each Nuer tribe and tribal section has its own pastures and water-supplies, and political fission is closely related to distribution of these natural resources, ownership of which is generally expressed in terms of clans and lineages. Disputes between tribal sections are very often about cattle, and cattle are the compensation for loss of life and limb that is so frequently their outcome. Leopard-skin chiefs and prophets are arbiters in questions in which cattle are the issue, or ritual agents in situations demanding sacrifice of ox or ram. Another 233 ritual specialist is the *wut ghok*, the Man of the Cattle. Likewise, 561 in speaking of age-sets and age-grades we find ourselves des-

[1] Nuer interest in their cattle has been emphasized by early travellers in their country. *Vide* Marno, op. cit., p. 343; Werne, op. cit., p. 439; du Couret, op. cit., p. 82.

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233 561 cribing the relations of men to their cattle, for the change from boyhood to manhood is most clearly marked by a corresponding change in those relations at initiation.

233 621 Small local groups pasture their cattle in common and jointly defend their homes and herds. Their solidarity is most evident in the dry season when they live in a circle of windscreens around a common kraal, but it can also be seen in their wet season isolation. A single family or household cannot protect and herd their cattle alone and the cohesion of territorial groups must be considered in the light of this fact.

233 581 The network of kinship ties which links members of local communities is brought about by the operation of exogamous rules, often stated in terms of cattle. The union of marriage is brought about by payment of cattle and every phase of the ritual is marked by their transference or slaughter. The legal status of the partners and of their children is defined by cattle-rights and obligations.

233 421 Cattle are owned by families. While the head of the household is alive he has full rights of disposal over the herd, though his wives have rights of use in the cows and his sons own some of the oxen. As each son, in order of seniority, reaches the age of marriage he marries with cows from the herd. The next son will have to wait till the herd has reached its earlier strength before he can marry in his turn. When the head of the household dies the herd still remains the centre of family life and Nuer strongly deprecate breaking it up, at any rate till all the sons have married, for it is a common herd in which all have equal rights. When the sons are married they and their wives and children generally live in adjacent homesteads. In the early part of the dry season one sees a joint family of this kind living in a circle of windscreens around a common kraal, and in the big camps formed later in the year one finds them occupying a distinct section in the lines of windscreens. The bond of cattle between brothers is continued long after each has a home and children of his own, for when a daughter of any one of them is married the others receive a large portion of her bride-wealth. Her grandparents, maternal uncles, paternal and maternal aunts, and even more distant relatives, also receive a portion. Kinship is customarily defined by reference to these payments, being most

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233 583 clearly pointed at marriage, when movements of cattle from kraal to kraal are equivalent to lines on a genealogical chart. It is also emphasized by division of sacrificial meat among agnatic and cognatic relatives.

233 553 The importance of cattle in Nuer life and thought is further exemplified in personal names. Men are frequently addressed by names that refer to the form and colour of their favourite oxen, and women take names from oxen and from the cows they milk. Even small boys call one another by ox-names when playing together in the pastures, a child usually taking his name from the bull-calf of the cow he and his mother milk. Often a man receives an ox-name or cow-name at birth. Sometimes the name of a man which is handed down to posterity is his ox-name and not his birth-name. Hence a Nuer genealogy may sound like an inventory of a kraal. The linguistic identification of a man with his favourite ox cannot fail to affect his attitude to the beast, and to Europeans the custom is the most striking evidence of the pastoral mentality of the Nuer.

233 775 Since cattle are a Nuer's most cherished possession being an essential food-supply and the most important social asset, it is easy to understand why they play a foremost part in ritual. A man establishes contact with the ghosts and spirits through his cattle. If one is able to obtain the history of each cow in a kraal, one obtains at the same time not only an account of all the kinship links and affinities of the owners but also of all their mystical connexions. Cows are dedicated to the spirits of the lineages of the owner and of his wife and to any personal spirit that has at some time possessed either of them. Other beasts are dedicated to ghosts of the dead. By rubbing ashes along the back of a cow or ox one may get into touch with the spirit or ghost associated with it and ask it for assistance. Another way of communicating with the dead and with spirits is by sacrifice, and no Nuer ceremony is complete without the sacrifice of a ram, he-goat, or ox.

233 183 We have seen in a brief survey of some Nuer institutions and customs that most of their social behaviour directly concerns their cattle. A fuller study of their culture would show everywhere the same dominant interest in cattle, e.g. in their folklore. They are always talking about their beasts. I used some-

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times to despair that I never discussed anything with the young men but live stock and girls, and even the subject of girls led inevitably to that of cattle. Start on whatever subject I would, and approach it from whatever angle, we would soon be speaking of cows and oxen, heifers and steers, rams and sheep, he-goats and she-goats, calves and lambs and kids. I have already indicated that this obsession—for such it seems to an outsider—is due not only to the great economic value of cattle but also to the fact that they are links in numerous social relationships. Nuer tend to define all social processes and relationships in terms of cattle. Their social idiom is a bovine idiom.

Consequently he who lives among Nuer and wishes to understand their social life must first master a vocabulary referring to cattle and to the life of the herds. Such complicated discussions as those which take place in negotiations of marriage, in ritual situations, and in legal disputes can only be followed when one understands the difficult cattle-terminology of colours, ages, sexes, and so forth.

Important though horticultural and piscatorial pursuits are in Nuer economy, pastoral pursuits take precedence because cattle not only have nutritive utility but have a general social value in other respects. I have mentioned a few situations in which this value is manifested, but have not recorded every role of cattle in Nuer culture, for they are significant in many social processes, including some I have mentioned, which lie outside the limited scope of this book. It seemed necessary to give an introductory sketch on these lines in order that the reader might understand that Nuer devotion to the herdsman's art is inspired by a range of interests far wider than simple need for food, and why cattle are a dominant value in their lives. We shall ask later how this value is related to environmental conditions and how far the two, taken together, help us to explain some characteristics of Nuer political structure.

II

Before the present century Nuer were far richer in cattle than they are now and it is probable that they cultivated less millet. Their stock has been impaired by repeated outbreaks of rinderpest, which still decimate the herds. It was probably more

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●233 destructive in the past than now, though the attacks I witnessed were severe; but in the past the warlike Nuer could always restore their losses by raiding Dinka. All Nuer agree that in the last generation their herds were more considerable and that the payments of bride-wealth and blood-wealth were forty, and sometimes fifty to sixty, head of cattle, whereas to-day the kinsmen of a bride do not expect to receive more than twenty to thirty. At the present time I would say, on a general impression, that the Nuer are far richer in stock than the Shilluk, but not so prosperous as the more favoured of the Dinka tribes.

It was difficult to make a census of cattle, even in a small area, and Nuer would certainly have regarded such an attempt with repugnance. On the few estimates made I would reckon an average of ten head of cattle and five goats and sheep to the byre. A byre of the ordinary size cannot hold more than a dozen or so adult kine. As there are some eight persons to a byre the cattle probably do not greatly exceed the human population. Cows predominate and probably compose about two-thirds of the herds. Many plates in this book show the appearance of Nuer cattle. Nuer say that a very large hump shows Beir origin and that very long horns are evidence of Dinka stock.

Some tribes are richer in cattle than others. Lou country is considered especially suitable for raising stock and is renowned for its large herds. The Eastern Jikany were once very rich in cattle, but their herds are still recovering from losses in epidemics that forced the people to cultivate more extensively. Cattle are everywhere evenly distributed. Hardly any one is entirely without them, and no one is very rich. Although cattle are a form of wealth that can be accumulated, a man never possesses many more beasts than his byre will hold, because as soon as his herd is large enough he, or one of his family, marries. The herd is thereby reduced to two or three beasts and the next few years are spent in repairing its losses. Every household goes through these alternating periods of poverty and comparative wealth. Marriages and epidemics prevent accumulation of cattle and no disparity in wealth offends the democratic sentiment of the people.

When we come to examine the Nuer political system we shall keep in mind that till recent years they have probably been

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more exclusively pastoral, and more nomadic, than at the present time, and that the dwindling of their herds may partly explain their persistent aggressiveness.

III

Although cattle have many uses they are chiefly useful for the milk they provide. Milk and millet (sorghum) are the staple foods of the Nuer. In some parts of their country, especially among the Lou, the millet supply seldom lasts the whole year, and when it is exhausted people are dependent on milk and fish. At such times a family may be sustained by the milk of a single cow. In all parts the millet crop is uncertain and more or less severe famines are frequent, during which people rely on fish, wild roots, fruits, and seeds, but mainly on the milk of their herds. Even when millet is plentiful it is seldom eaten alone, for without milk, whey, or liquid cheese, Nuer find it stodgy, unpalatable, and, especially for children, indigestible. They regard milk as essential for children, believing that they cannot be well and happy without it, and the needs of children are always the first to be satisfied even if, as happens in times of privation, their elders have to deny themselves. In Nuer eyes the happiest state is that in which a family possesses several lactating cows, for then the children are well-nourished and there is a surplus that can be devoted to cheese-making and to assisting kinsmen and entertaining guests. A household can generally obtain milk for its little children because a kinsman will lend them a lactating cow, or give them part of its milk, if they do not possess one. This kinship obligation is acknowledged by all and is generously fulfilled, because it is recognized that the needs of children are the concern of neighbours and relatives, and not of the parents alone. Occasionally, however, after an epidemic or, to a lesser degree, after two or three youths of the group have married, an entire hamlet, or even a whole village may experience scarcity. Sometimes, also, shortage is caused by a tendency for the cows of a village to cease lactating at about the same time.

Nuer value their cows according to the amount of milk they give and they know the merits of each in this respect. The calves of a good milch cow are more highly prized than the

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VI

Q33 In later chapters we shall describe how the needs of cattle, water, pasturage, protection from carnivorous beasts and biting insects, and so forth, are attended to, and show in what manner they determine human routine and affect social relations. Leaving these broader issues on one side, we ask here whether the Nuer, who are so reliant on their cattle and who value them so highly, are competent herdsmen. It is unnecessary to state that they give their beasts every attention that their knowledge allows, but it is pertinent to inquire whether their knowledge suffices. It was especially noted where Nuer practice is not in accord with the conventions of farming, and the reasons for the divergence were investigated. A few of the more evident difficulties and some general observations on Nuer husbandry are recorded below.

1. Since the cows are not brought back to the kraals at midday the smaller calves must go without nourishment for many hours each day. However, Capt. H. B. Williams, Director of the Sudan Veterinary Department, tells me that Nuer oxen have the reputation of being as good as any in the Sudan, so that their development as young calves cannot be seriously arrested. In the rains the cows are seldom milked before 9 to 10 a.m. and again at about 5 p.m., but in the dry season they may be taken to pasture as early as 8 a.m. and not return till about 5.30 p.m., so that they cannot suckle their calves for about ten hours. However, this long interval is not easily avoided, for in the dry season the grazing grounds are often distant and owing to lack of good pasturage the cattle require longer to feed than in the rains. In the rains it would be a simple matter to pasture the herd at daybreak and bring it home at midday, as many East African peoples do, for the cows to suckle their calves and chew the cud. But Nuer say that when the cattle come out of their hot smoky byres they like to rest a while in the kraal before going to pasture, and their lethargy, which contrasts with their eagerness to graze after a night in the open in dry season camps, seems to justify this statement. Nuer realize that the heat and smoke of byres are bad for the cattle, but they consider mosquitoes worse.

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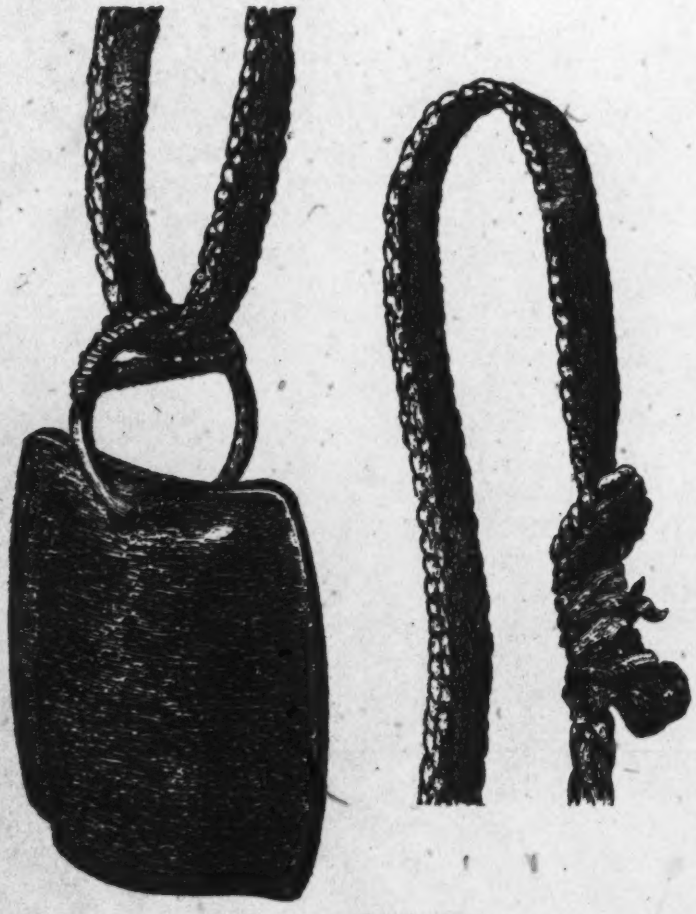

Fig. 4. Ox-bell and collar.

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Also by waiting till the dew has evaporated they consider they lessen the risk of digestive troubles, for in the rains the ground is cold and damp till a late hour. A further reason for keeping the cattle late in the kraals is that if they are loosened early they soon graze to repletion and begin to wander in all directions, since they are not usually herded in the rains.

2. It at once strikes a European that the condition of drinking water at periods of the dry season leaves much to be desired, especially if he has to drink it himself. Sometimes the pools have almost dried up and contain foul, even slimy, water which men and cattle drink. I have wondered why they do not move sooner from these small pools, such as that shown on Plate XXI (*b*), around which they camp in the early drought, to the rivers and lakes where they make their final concentrations, but I do not distrust their judgement, for they are fully aware that dirty water is neither palatable to, nor good for, the cattle, and when circumstances permit they are at pains to ensure that they are supplied with clean water as often as they require it. In moving camp they have to take into account a number of desiderata: pasturage, fishing, the harvest of *Balanites aegyptiaca*, the second millet harvest, &c., besides conditions of water.

3. Unlike some East African peoples Nuer do not keep too many entire animals. If they err at all it is in keeping too few. On the limited observations made it was estimated that there is one adult bull to about thirty or forty adult cows. Nuer try to select as stud bulls the calves of their best milch cows so that they may breed good milch cows from them. They say that if they did not castrate most of the bull calves the cows would get no peace and there would be constant fighting in the kraals and commotion in the byres. A calf is not castrated till it is about eighteen months to two years old: 'When its dam has had another calf and a third is in its womb.' It is thrown, the scrotum is cut with a spear, and the testicles drawn out and severed. There is little loss of blood and the animal soon recovers. A calf may be castrated for sacrificial purposes at any time, but otherwise Nuer prefer to perform the operation in the dry season for there is less chance of inflammation than in the rains. Bulls are not discouraged from fighting unless they belong to the same herd, and fights are often cited in

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•233 tradition as the cause of fission and migration of lineages. A very large number of steers and oxen are slaughtered in sacrifices.

4. Heifers are not served till their third year. Nuer know when a cow is on heat by its behaviour in the kraal: it is restless, lows, swishes its tail, sniffs at the vulvas of other cows, and tries to mount them. If a cow has mated in the grazing grounds—for bulls run with the herd—the first signs of pregnancy are said to be vulvar changes. If you ask Nuer when a cow which has been served at a certain time will calve they can at once, and accurately, tell you. They say that if a cow has had no serious illness it will bear about eight calves.

Fig. 5. Stuffed calf's head.

In my experience there is very slight mortality among calves. Nuer give them every attention. When a cow is seen to be about to calve for the first time its owner sits up with it all night, or accompanies it to pasture, to assist delivery. An experienced cow is left to drop its calf itself, but a man is usually present to assist if it is in trouble. He must be present if it calves in the bush, because the calf is too weak to follow its dam, which will stay with it, and they may become separated from the herd and fall a prey to wild beasts. If a calf dies in the womb Nuer try to remove it, and when it is necessary to turn it in the womb they perform this operation. If the afterbirth does not fall, or if the cow does not lick its calf, they administer medicines. When a calf dies they resort to various devices to persuade its dam to give milk. They stuff the head with straw (see Fig. 5), and rub some of the dam's urine on it; or, especially when a cow aborts, they stuff the whole calf, insert stumps of wood to act as legs, and place it in front of its dam and push its head against her teats, while they gently squeeze and pull them and a boy blows up the vagina.

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Nuer say that if a calf is only a day or two old and its dam dies it will also die, but once it knows the *cak tin bor*, 'the white milk' which follows the colostrum, it can be saved. It is fed by hand from a small gourd with a funnel mouth and efforts are made to get another cow in lactation to suckle it. Since Nuer believe, erroneously it seems, that it is dangerous for a calf to drink the discoloured milk at the top of the colostrum, they milk this off before allowing the calf to suck, and if by inadvertence it sucks first they administer a purgative. They regard it as more serious if there is any blood in the milk.

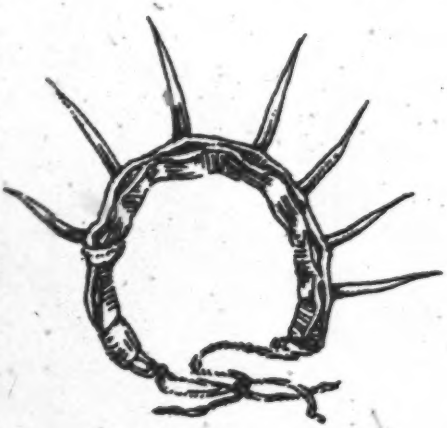

FIG. 6. Calf's weaning ring.

For the first three or four days a calf sucks all its dam's milk except the part drawn off. Then close kinsmen, who live near by, are summoned to eat porridge over which is poured the first milk taken for human consumption. At this ceremony the end hairs of the calf's tail are cut off and its owner spits on them and waves them over the back of the dam, for otherwise the calf will sicken because it resents people stealing its milk. Afterwards, however, they can still say, 'We do not yet share with its calf', for they take very little milk for the first fortnight in order to give it a chance to get strong and for its teeth to harden. When the calf is stronger they take more milk and they then say that the calf shares (*buth*) the milk with men. It continues to suck till its dam is again in calf and refuses it. Weaning devices are not as a rule employed, but if the dam suckles when it is pregnant and it is found impracticable to keep it apart from its calf in the pastures they place a ring of thorns round the calf's muzzle (Fig. 6), which allows it to graze but prevents it from sucking, for the thorns prick the dam's udder and she kicks it aside. It will be seen from this account how Nuer solve the herdsman's problem of making cows provide for their masters without depriving their calves of essential nourishment.

Small calves, after the adult herd has gone to the grazing grounds, are housed till the late afternoon in byres in wet-season villages, and tethered in the shade of a tree in dry-season camps.

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They are watered during the afternoon, and boys bring them grasses, especially *poon* (*Oryza Barthii*), which is very fattening. They begin to go to pasture with the older calves, under the care of herdboys, in about their third month and are kept apart from their dams by being driven in the opposite direction to that taken earlier in the day by the adult herd. They run with the herd when they are about a year old, by which time their dams are again in calf.

We shall have opportunities for noting further the attention Nuer give to their cattle and the wisdom of their methods. I have merely given in this section a few examples to illustrate a general conclusion reached in the course of my study: that Nuer cattle husbandry could not in any important particular be improved in their present oecological relations; that, consequently, more knowledge than they possess would in no way assist them; and that, as will be shown, were it not for their unceasing vigilance and care the cattle would not survive the harsh conditions of their environment.

VII

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It has been remarked that the Nuer might be called parasites of the cow, but it might be said with equal force that the cow is a parasite of the Nuer, whose lives are spent in ensuring its welfare. They build byres, kindle fires, and clean kraals for its comfort; move from villages to camps, from camp to camp, and from camps back to villages, for its health; defy wild beasts for its protection; and fashion ornaments for its adornment. It lives its gentle, indolent, sluggish life thanks to the Nuer's devotion. In truth the relationship is symbiotic: cattle and men sustain life by their reciprocal services to one another. In this intimate symbiotic relationship men and beasts form a single community of the closest kind. In a few paragraphs I direct attention to this intimacy.

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The men wake about dawn at camp in the midst of their cattle and sit contentedly watching them till milking is finished. They then either take them to pasture and spend the day watching them graze, driving them to water, composing songs about them, and bringing them back to camp, or they remain in the kraal to drink their milk, make tethering-cords and ornaments

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for them, water and in other ways care for their calves, clean their kraal, and dry their dung for fuel. Nuer wash their hands and faces in the urine of the cattle, especially when cows urinate during milking, drink their milk and blood, and sleep on their hides by the side of their smouldering dung. They cover their bodies, dress their hair, and clean their teeth with the ashes of cattle dung, and eat their food with spoons made from their horns. When the cattle return in the evening they tether each beast to its peg with cords made from the skins of their dead companions and sit in the windscreens to contemplate them and to watch them being milked. A man knows each animal of his herd and of the herds of his neighbours and kinsmen: its colour, the shape of its horns, its peculiarities, the number of its teats, the amount of milk it gives, its history, its ancestry and its progeny. Miss Soule tells me that most Nuer know the points of the dam and grand-dam of a beast and that some know the points of its forebears up to five generations of ascent. A Nuer knows the habits of all his oxen, how one bellows in the evenings, how another likes to lead the herd on its return to camp, and how another tosses its head more than the rest are wont to do. He knows which cows are restless during milking, which are troublesome with their calves, which like to drink on the way to pasture, and so forth.

If he is a young man he gets a boy to lead his favourite ox, after which he takes his name, round the camp in the morning and leaps and sings behind it; and often at night he walks among the cattle ringing an ox-bell and singing the praises of his kinsmen, his sweethearts, and his oxen. When his ox comes home in the evening he pets it, rubs ashes on its back, removes ticks from its belly and scrotum, and picks adherent dung from its anus. He tethers it in front of his windscreen so that he can see it if he wakes, for no sight so fills a Nuer with contentment and pride as his oxen. The more he can display the happier he is, and to make them more attractive he decorates their horns with long tassels, which he can admire as they toss their heads and shake them on their return to camp, and their necks with bells, which tinkle in the pastures. Even the bull calves are adorned by their boy-owners with wooden beads and bells (Fig. 13). The horns of young bulls, destined to be

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233 181 castrated later, are generally cut so that they will grow in a shape that pleases their masters. The operation, called *ngat*, is probably performed towards the end of their first year and usually takes place in the dry season, as it is said that a steer may die if its horns are cut in the rains. The animal is thrown and held down while its horns are cut through obliquely with a spear. They grow against the cut. The beasts appear to suffer much pain during the operation and I have sometimes heard Nuer compare their ordeal to the initiation of youths into manhood.

When a Nuer mentions an ox his habitual moroseness leaves him and he speaks with enthusiasm, throwing up his arms to show you how its horns are trained. 'I have a fine ox', he says, 'a brindled ox with a large white splash on its back and with one horn trained over its muzzle'—and up go his hands, one above his head and the other bent at the elbow across his face. In singing and dancing they call out the names of their oxen and hold their arms in imitation of their horns.

233 181 854 The attitude towards cattle varies with varying situations in social life and with changes in social development. As soon as children can crawl they are brought into close intimacy with the flocks and herds. The kraal is their playground and they are generally smeared with dung in which they roll and tumble. The calves and sheep and goats are their companions in play and they pull them about and sprawl in the midst of them. Their feelings about the animals are probably dominated by desire for food, for the cows, ewes, and she-goats directly satisfy their hunger, often suckling them. As soon as a baby can drink animal's milk its mother carries it to the sheep and goats and gives it warm milk to drink straight from the udders.

233 181 857 868 The games of rather older children of both sexes centre round cattle. They build byres of sand in camps and of moistened ashes or mud in villages, and fill the toy kraals with fine mud cows and oxen (Fig. 7), with which they play at herding and marriage. The first tasks of childhood concern cattle. Very small children hold the sheep and goats while their mothers milk them, and when their mothers milk the cows they carry the gourds and pull the calves away from the udders and tether them in front of their dams. They collect urine in gourds and

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wash themselves in it. When they are a little older and stronger they have to clean the byres and kraals, assist in the milking, and herd the small calves and the sheep and goats at pasture.

FIG. 7. Mud figures of oxen decorated with tassels.

Food and play contacts with the cattle have changed to labour contacts. At this age the interests of the sexes in cattle begin to diverge and the divergence becomes more apparent as they grow up. The labour of girls and women is restricted to the byres and the kraals and is concerned mostly with the cows, while boys herd the calves at pasture, as well as assisting in the kraal,

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and after initiation they herd the adult cattle and in the kraal give their attention mainly to the oxen. The women are dairy-maids; the men herdsmen. Moreover, to a girl the cows are essentially providers of milk and cheese and they remain such when she grows up and is married and milks and churns for her husband's people, whereas to a boy they are part of the family herd in which he has property rights. They have entered the herd on the marriage of his kinswomen and one day he will marry with them. A girl is separated from the herd on marriage; a boy remains as its owner. When a boy becomes a youth and is initiated into manhood the cattle become something more than food and the cause of labour. They are also a means of display and marriage. It is only when a man marries and has children and an independent household and herd, when he has become an elder and man of position, that he often uses cattle as sacrifices, invests them with a sacred significance, and employs them in ritual.

The Nuer and his herd form a corporate community with solidarity of interests, to serve which the lives of both are adjusted, and their symbiotic relationship is one of close physical contact. The cattle are docile and readily respond to human care and guidance. No high barriers of culture divide men from beasts in their common home, but the stark nakedness of Nuer amid their cattle and the intimacy of their contact with them present a classic picture of savagery. I ask the reader to look at some of the illustrations, for example the Frontispiece and Plates III, V, and XVII, which will convey to him better than I can do in words the crudity of kraal life.

Cattle are not only an object of absorbing interest to Nuer, having great economic utility and social value, but they live in the closest possible association with them. Moreover, irrespective of use, they are in themselves a cultural end, and the mere possession of, and proximity to, them gives a man his heart's desire. On them are concentrated his immediate interests and his farthest ambitions. More than anything else they determine his daily actions and dominate his attention. We have remarked on the over-emphasis on cattle produced by their wide range of social and economic uses. So many physical, psychological, and social requirements can be satisfied from

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this one source that Nuer attention, instead of being diffused in a variety of directions, tends, with undue exclusiveness, to be focused on this single object and to be introvertive, since the object has a certain identity with themselves. We will now examine briefly some linguistic material wherein we shall perceive further evidence of this hypertrophy of a single interest and of the identification of men with cattle to which I have alluded.

VIII

Linguistic profusion in particular departments of life is one of the signs by which one quickly judges the direction and strength of a people's interests. It is for that reason, rather than for its intrinsic importance, that we draw the reader's attention to the volume and variety of the Nuer cattle vocabulary. Like all the pastoral Nilotes they use an enormous number of words and phrases about cattle and the tasks of herding and dairy-work, and from this vast assortment we select for comment a single class: the terms by which they describe cattle, chiefly by reference to their colours.[1] These terms are more than a linguistic technique which enables Nuer to speak of cattle with precision in situations of practical husbandry and in the many social contexts in which they figure, for they establish associations on the one hand between wild creatures and cattle and on the other hand between cattle and their masters; they furnish certain ritual categories; and they greatly enrich the language of poetry.

In naming a Nuer cow one has to notice its colours and the way in which they are distributed on its body. When it is not of one colour the distribution of colours is the significant character by which one names it. There are ten principal colour terms: white (*bor*), black (*car*), brown (*lual*), chestnut (*dol*), tawny (*yan*), mouse-grey (*lou*), bay (*thiang*), sandy-grey (*lith*), blue and strawberry roan (*yil*), and chocolate (*guir*). When a cow is of a single colour it is described by one of these terms. An animal may combine two or more colours, but a combination of more than two, known as *cuany*, is very rare. Normally there is a combination of white with one other colour and twelve common distributions of this com-

[1] I have recorded some information on this neglected subject among a neighbouring people in 'Imagery in Ngok Dinka Cattle-Names', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, 1934.

[pp. 42-43 contain no textual material]

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Here we make only two observations of a more general order. (1) Although the Nuer have a mixed pastoral-horticultural economy their country is more suitable for cattle husbandry than for horticulture, so that the environmental bias coincides with the bias of their interest and does not encourage a change in the balance in favour of horticulture. If it were not for rinderpest—a recent introduction—it might be possible to live a purely pastoral life, but, as we shall see later, a purely horticultural life would be precarious. (2) Nuer cannot, except in a few favoured spots, live in one place throughout the year. The floods drive them and their herds to seek the protection of higher ground. Absence of water and pasture on this higher ground compels them to move during the drought. Hence their life is of necessity migratory, or, more strictly, transhumant. A further reason that urges them to change their abode according to the seasons is their inability at the present time to subsist solely on the products of their cattle. A milk and meat diet has to be supplemented by grain and fish; and whereas the most suitable place for cultivation of millet is inland, on the edge of slightly elevated ground, fish are found in rivers which are generally distant from these elevated stretches.

II

Excess or insufficiency of water is the first problem that faces Nuer. It is essential that cattle should be protected from the water that covers the country in the rains, for they quickly get diseases of the hoof if they have to stand in water for long periods. Village sites are selected on the only spots affording such protection to man and beast: patches of slightly higher ground. When the rains have ceased water supplies near villages are soon exhausted, because, naturally, the highest and driest sites have been selected for building, and it becomes necessary to move to pools, lakes, lagoons, marshes, and rivers. Owing to the vast rivers that traverse Nuerland and the thorough irrigation they give to the country through a network of channels there is seldom difficulty about finding surface water, though people may have to go far to obtain it. Only in parts of Lou, Gaawar, and Eastern Jikany, as far as is known, are they regularly forced to dig wells in the beds of streams at the height of the

[p. 58 contains no textual material]

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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drought. Twenty years ago this was probably more customary among the Lou than to-day, for they had not then the undisputed access to open water that most sections now enjoy. The wells, which have to be redug each year, are two to three feet in diameter and twenty to thirty feet in depth, and their excavation takes two or three days of hard labour. The water, about a foot deep, is clean and fresh and the wells are frequently cleaned out, steps being cut in the walls for this purpose (Plate XV (*b*)). Each household has its own well which is surrounded by shallow mud troughs where the cattle are watered three times daily. Considerable labour is required to draw water for them and much attention is devoted to prevent it from being fouled by sheep and goats, which have their special troughs. Fights sometimes break out over these troughs.

The problem of water is closely related to that of vegetation. In their seasonal movements Nuer seek pasturage as well as drinking-water and they take the cattle to where they know that both can be obtained. When herdsmen drive the cattle from camp to grazing grounds they do not guide them haphazardly across the plain, but with purpose towards stretches of succulent grasses. It is probable, too, that not only are daily and seasonal movements influenced by distribution of grasses, but also that the direction of Nuer expansion has been controlled by their habitat. Nuer claim that they have not overrun the country of the Ngok Dinka because it is poor pasture land and that they are little interested in the Shilluk kingdom for the same reason.

The early rains are the season of fatness, for then the grasses germinate, or renew their growth after the long drought, and the cattle can graze on the young shoots to their content. As the rains advance, grazing becomes more difficult, the ground being flooded and the vegetation rank, and in years of high water may be a serious problem. The cattle have to rely on the short grasses that prevail on village ridges: a further reason that compels Nuer to occupy these sites in the rains. When rain ceases, the overcropped grasses on these ridges soon wither, while the rank grasses of the plains impede the movements of the herds and no longer provide good grazing. Therefore Nuer hasten to burn them as soon as they are dry, since some species

[p. 60 contains no textual material]

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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send up new shoots a few days after being fired—probably those that have roots long enough to tap water held up in the clay beds and a clump formation that protects the core of the plants from the flames. If it were not for this habit cattle could not survive, at any rate inland, during a dry year. When the grasses have been fired cattle can wander as they please, being no longer frustrated by surface water and rank growth, and satisfy their appetites on the new shoots. As water becomes scarcer and grazing poorer Nuer fall back on permanent water where they make large camps and the cattle can graze on marsh plants that abound in numberless depressions and make good milk. In May, when the new rains set in, they are able to return to their villages. The few cattle Nuer possess, the vast spaces they can exploit, and their nomadic existence ensure that there is nowhere serious overgrazing.

Variation of water-supplies and vegetation thus forces Nuer to move and determines the direction of their movements. In a later section we shall see that fishing is another important consideration in these movements. In late November or early December the youths and some of the girls take the cattle from the villages to camps, generally some miles away, leaving the older people to harvest the second millet crop and repair huts and byres. Usually a few lactating cows are left behind to provide milk for the small children. These early camps (*wec ɟiom*) are made near pools in a place where the grasses have previously been fired. In Lou country they are often made in thornwood forest, where *Balanites aegyptiaca* is abundant, but in many parts of Nuerland, especially to the west of the Nile, they are formed on stream banks for fishing. When the second harvest has been reaped the cattle are brought back to the villages to eat the millet stalks, if they are near enough. As pools dry up, pasturage is exhausted, or fishing becomes poor, the youths make new camps, where they are joined by the married people, and they may move camp several times before settling in their final camping grounds (*wec mat*) at the side of lakes or rivers in January and February. The early camps are small, being manned by a few kinsmen, but they tend to get larger as the season advances and water becomes scarcer, and the final camps may contain several hundred persons.

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The dry season movements of the Lou, the Eastern Jikany, and the Zeraf River tribes are shown on the sketch-maps accompanying this section. Of the Sobat tribes, the Lou stay inland as long as they can and in a wet year may remain inland throughout the dry season, falling back on the deeper pools, some large enough to be called lakes, e.g. Muot tot, Muot dit, Fading, Fadoi, Gwonggwong, Yollei, Tepjor, and Nyerol. If forced to leave them the Gun primary section moves north to the Sobat and south-west to the flooded plains of the Bahr el Zeraf in the country of the Twic Dinka, and the Mor primary section moves north-east to the Nyanding river and east to the Geni and Pibor. In the old days [121] fighting frequently occurred if the Lou moved to these camping sites, because the banks of the Sobat were in the hands of the Balak Dinka while their occupation of the Geni and Pibor was disputed by the Anuak and Beir and their move to the south-west was trespass on Dinka grazing grounds. Even the lower reaches of the Nyanding do not belong to the Lou, but to the Gaajok. Therefore they probably only moved to these sites when absolutely necessary.

The Eastern Jikany have not so much need to move as have the Lou. Nevertheless they all fall back on rivers or marshes before the drought is far advanced. The three primary sections of the Gaajok move as follows: the Laang concentrate on the Sobat, the Wangkac move south-east to the banks of the Pibor and Gila, and the Yol either camp near the junction of the Wokau and Sobat or northwards along the edges of the Machar swamp. The Gaagwang move to the western end of Khor Makwai. The Gaajak primary sections move as follows: the northern Thiang sections (Kang and Lony) go to the Daga river while the southern Thiang section (Tar) and the Reng, Nyayan, Wau, and Cany sections camp on the banks of the Baro, Jokau, Adura, and Makwei, mainly in Ethiopia.

The three Zeraf river tribes fall back on the Bahr el Jebel and the Bahr el Zeraf and streams flowing into these two rivers, as shown in Mr. Lewis's sketch. The Gaawar who live on the left bank of the Zeraf can build their villages on high ground near that river and do not have to move far in the drought.

The Western Nuer mainly camp on inland streams which are no great distance from their villages. The Karlual primary section of the Leek tribe mostly concentrate first on the Loogh stream and afterwards on the Cal and Wangtac, all of which link up with the Bahr el Ghazal. The Dok camp near pools in the beds of inland streams. The Western Jikany move to the Jikany marshes at the edge of the Bahr el Ghazal. Without giving

[See pp 80, 88, 60 — Analysis]

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further details, which, indeed, I could not furnish, about the disposition of the Western Nuer in the dry season, it may be said that they travel very much less than most of the Eastern Nuer tribes, especially the Lou.

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Different villages and sections tend to move about the same time and to visit the same pools each year, though time and place and, to some extent, degree of concentration vary according to climatic conditions. Usually, however, the main dry season camps are formed yearly at the same spots. When the rains commence in May the older people return to the villages to prepare the ground for sowing and they are joined there in June by the youths and girls, who bring the cattle with them. When the younger people return the whole camp is broken up on the same day, and the cattle are driven to their village with as few halts as possible. The move from villages to camps, on the contrary, is less concerted and abrupt. The younger members of two or three families form a small camp, after the firing of the grasses in November, when and where they please. Several days later they may be joined by other people from the same village, or these may form a separate camp. There is still water and some grazing on the village sites and there is still work to be accomplished in gardens and homesteads. Thus, while camps change into villages overnight, villages change into camps more slowly. By the height of the drought every one is in camp and the villages are silent and deserted.

The year thus consists of a period in villages and a period in camps, and the camp period is divided into the early part of the dry season when the younger people move from small camp to small camp and the latter part of the dry season when every one is concentrated in large camps round permanent water which they do not leave till they return to their villages.

III

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Nuer are forced into villages for protection against floods and mosquitoes and to engage in horticulture, and are forced out of villages into camps by drought and barrenness of vegetation and to engage in fishing. I describe these villages and camps very shortly.

Some tribes are better off for sites than others. The Lou

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PLATE XXIII

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a. Section of camp kraal (Lou)

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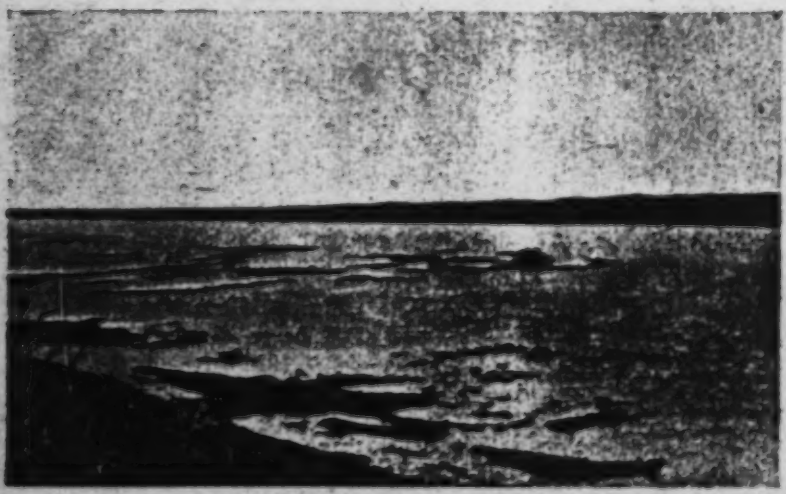

b. Sobat river in the dry season (Lou)

[Face p. 216]

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
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KINSHIP AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

361 The Nuer speak of a man's homestead as his *gol*, the primary meaning of which word is the heap of smouldering cattle-dung in the centre of a byre and the hearth around it. In its narrowest social use the word means family, the occupants of the homestead, and it may also therefore have the further sense of household, since there may be other persons living there than members of the owner's family who count nevertheless, as we would say, as members of the family. Frequently the byres and huts of two or three families, the heads of which are commonly brothers or a man and his married sons, are grouped around a common kraal so that we may then speak of a composite homestead; or several homesteads, owned generally by close kin, are adjacent to one another and form distinct clusters which we may call hamlets. Nuer speak of a composite homestead as the *gol* of so-and-so, naming its senior member, although they also refer to each of its component homesteads as the *gol* of its particular owner. They may use the same word to describe what I have called a hamlet, though a cluster of this kind with the land around it is also designated by the word *dhor*, combined with the name either of its senior member, as *dhor* Nyang, the hamlet of Nyang, or of some natural feature, as *dhor ngop*, the hamlet of the wild fig-tree. In its widest connotation *gol* may have the sense of 'lineage', when a lineage is thought of as a residential group. The word *cieng*, which has the general sense of 'home', may be employed to describe a residential group of any size, from single homestead to large tribal division. It is usually coupled with the name of a lineage when it refers to local groups of any size.

When Nuer leave their villages in the dry season they collect, often after temporary dispersal, in large waterside camps. There is then greater solidarity, both spatial and moral, than in the rains. The community of a camp is crowded together in grass windscreens and little grass beehive huts, and the herds which in the rains are tethered in separate kraals are now tethered in the same [233] kraal or in adjacent kraals. In the rains, when water is abundant and pasturage near at hand, the cattle are either not herded at all or each family, or a group of adjacent families, herds its own; but in the dry season, when conditions are different, the cattle of a camp are watered and pastured together and the different families 221 take it in turn to provide herdsmen. Activities performed of necessity or by preference in parties—hunting, fishing, and collecting—

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
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wife's family in view of the fact that the man who has married their daughter has joined their community and is bringing up his children as members of it. They may even give him some of their own cattle to help him build up a herd. The second fact to be taken into consideration is the Nuer custom, for various reasons not always observed, by which the eldest child of a marriage is brought up by his, or her, maternal grandparents. A child brought up in his maternal kinsmen's village naturally feels that in some respects it, and not his paternal kinsmen's village, is his home.

Cattle are a powerful element, often the deciding consideration, especially in the minds of unadopted Dinka captives or immigrants, in a man's choice of residence. A Nuer cannot live for long without cattle, and he who possesses none must attach himself to the byre and herd of some kinsman. Men with only a few beasts also sometimes find it a convenience to tether them in the byre of a kinsman rather than build a byre of their own. One often finds that the reason a man decides to live with one of his maternal kin, with a paternal aunt, with one of his affinal kin, or with the family of a widow-concubine, is that he knows that the person he intends to reside with will allow him to be a member of the household, will give shelter to his animals if he has any, and will help him to start a herd if he lacks cattle entirely; whereas his paternal kinsmen are unable or unwilling to do so, or, in the case of many Dinka, are altogether absent.

As a further conclusion, I remark again that the drawing together by, and into, the lineage system of the many different strands of kinship (and affinity) which compose the network of social ties in each local community gives the community its unitary character and fixes its position in tribal structure. The points at which they are drawn together are the 'bulls' of the kinship clusters, and especially the tribal 'bulls', those men who are persons not only of age, wealth, and character, but also members of the dominant clan of the tribe—tribal aristocrats. These tribal 'bulls' are the centres of clusters of kin, but they are also agnates, and each has in relation to the others a structural position in the lineage system of the dominant clan. Through them, therefore, all the tribesmen are attached to the dominant clan of the tribe and all the local communities are assimilated to the highly consistent structure of its segments, in which they are conceptualized. It is

5:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1947
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man marries the woman and not the woman the man: one can say "Duob has married Nyaluak" or "Nyaluak has been married by Duob", but one cannot say that Nyaluak has married Duob. It is understood that the woman was *kuen ka ghok*, married with cattle, for she would have been married in no other way. The persons among whom the cattle are distributed are also said to *kuen* them (*be guanden yang kene doude kuen*, the paternal uncle will receive a cow and a calf) and they are said to be *kuen* by the cattle (*baa deman kuen e thak*, the uterine brother will be paid an ox). There is no noun in Nuer by which the cattle handed over at marriage can be described, though one can use the expression *ghok kuin nyal*, the cattle of marrying a girl.

But to say that bridewealth is not price or purchase does not mean that the objects handed over have no significance to Nuer outside the particular purpose they serve in bringing about a union. Cattle have, as I have shown in my book on the Nuer,[5] many uses. They are one of the main sources of food and they supply many other domestic requirements, they have a prestige value, and they have a religious importance. The payment or receipt of bridewealth changes a man's fortune in a very material way. The bridegroom's family are often impoverished, sometimes to the point of privation, though their kinsmen and affines will help them if they reach this point; while in the bride's home the milk gourds and butter gourds are full. A man who receives only one cow of the bridewealth has in it the promise of a herd.

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It is for this reason that Nuer found it difficult to understand what I meant when I told them that in my society we marry without paying bridewealth: "It does not matter. After all, every country has its own customs. But is it right that the father and mother of your wife should go

[5] *The Nuer*, 1940, Chap. 1.

[P. 181 b]

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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823 104 *tap*. A big open river is generally called *kir e.g.* the Bahr el Jebel and the Sobat but a river may have its proper name, *e.g.* the Bahr el Ghazal is called Naam. Smaller rivers or streams are denoted by the word *yir*. A marshy depression inland is called *wang* and a big lagoon running out of one of one of the main rivers is called *bar*. A marshy depression running parallel to a river bank is called *tor*. *Toc* are extensive swamps which form the flood plains of rivers.

VIII

311 From my description of their country it will be seen that the Nuer are faced with problems which daunt men better equipped than them. For they are so poor that they have little but their courage and their knowledge to master a harsh environment. Nuer have to consider how to protect and pasture their cattle and also how to grow maze and millet, for they practise both cattle husbandry and hoe-culture and have to take the requirements of both into account. As gardeners their difficulties only arise in the rains for in the dry season nothing will grow in the waterless wastes. As herdsmen there are problems to be solved at all seasons. Gardening will be described later. Here we may consider how Nuer ensure the welfare of their herds by adapting their life to the seasons.

•233 361 243 Excess or insufficiency of water is their first problem. It is essential that men and cattle should be protected from the water which covers most of the country in the rains. Cattle get diseases of the hooves and die if they have to stand in water. Protection is given to man and beast by building huts and byres on higher ground. In selecting a village site two considerations must be borne in mind. Firstly there must be a sloping ridge off which rain-water can run to the plain below and this ridge must be broad enough to allow huts and byres to be built and for the cattle to be tethered in the kraals outside the byres. Preferably it should also be broad and long enough to allow the flocks and herds to pasture without having to descend into the inundated plains to graze among the tall rank grasses. Secondly there must be land on one side of the ridge suitable for cultivations, *i.e.*, land which will retain sufficient water for the millet to grow

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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but not enough to drown it altogether. The ideal arrangement, which I have often observed among the Western Nuer, is to build on the edge of a whale-backed ridge with the huts and byres facing the broad back of the ridge. This ensures that the cattle will have dry kraals and also permits them to graze on the short grasses of the ridge. At the back of the huts and byres on slightly lower ground are the gardens. These must be on lower ground because the ridge itself is usually sandy and, where occupied, has a hard trodden floor of ashes and debris and is therefore unsuitable for cultivation of millet. They must also be at the back of the huts and byres so that the cattle can move freely to and from their kraals without invading the standing millet. To prevent this happening people erect a thornwood fence between the kraals and the gardens and extend it along both sides of the kraal, so that only the side opening on to the ridge is left unfenced. In Western Nuerland I have seen low mud dykes erected between the flooded plain and the approach to the ridge. These are to prevent the water encroaching too far in years of high flood.

I have sometimes wondered why Nuer so often build their villages on shadeless ridges in the middle of a treeless plain when it would be possible to build in some of the stretches of thornwood or palm forest that one finds here and there in their country. I have often noticed villages built in the open when shady spots are to be found a few hundred yards away. But Nuer can give good reasons for keeping to their dreary sites exposed to the fierce tropical sun and the bitter north wind. In the open their animals are safer from wild beasts; they are less worried by insect pests, and their kraals soon dry after rain. It would appear also that thornwood forest is less suitable for cultivation of millet than more open country. Nevertheless Nuer sometimes build in open forest. I have seen forest villages in parts of Lou and Eastern Gaajok country. The Eastern Gaajok villages, which I have not visited, are mainly in forest country.

Most of these ridges and knolls have probably been occupied for a very long period of time, perhaps long before the Nuer lived in their present home. In digging graves Nuer have found pots and cooking

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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stones and remains of fires. They have been occupied by many generations of Nuer. Families are not, however, bound to any particular piece of ground, and move freely when the ground is exhausted and no longer yields a good harvest of millet or rich pasturage for the cattle. A whole village may then move and live elsewhere for some years but sooner or later they will settle there again for it is their birth place. Families and groups of kinsmen will leave a village if there are many deaths, if the cattle are poorly (*be ran gien kä kwi tieth, kä kwi ghok*), or if fights have taken place in the village. Byres and huts generally last about five years and have then to be rebuilt. Gardens are cultivated for as long as ten successive years before they are finally exhausted. When cattle and sheep and goats have grazed on village pastures (*dor*) for about the same length of time the grasses show evident signs of exhaustion. Thus in 1936 the people of Nyueny pointed out to me that after about nine years of occupation their village pastures had been overgrazed and were poor in consequence.

Village sites are owned by certain clans and sections of clans. However, ownership is mainly a matter of sentiment, based on long association between a ridge and a lineage, and since the country is not over-populated and the Nuer do not make very extensive cultivations it never becomes a legal issue. Anyone may settle in a village and the villagers will show him where he may build his huts and byre and cultivate his millet. This practically means that he may build and cultivate anywhere not already in occupation or under cultivation. Nuer are very generous in such matters. In fact, however, a man is unlikely to settle in a village unless he can claim kinship with some of the villagers, *i.e.*, is genealogically attached to the dominant lineage there. *Mar*, kinship, can generally be discovered somewhere and consequently it is usually possible to place all the occupants of a village on a single genealogical chart. There are no real problems of ownership of land among the Nuer.

Some parts of Nuerland are blessed with better village sites than others. Lou country is exceptionally well favoured in this respect though Western Nuerland has many fine ridges. Lou people say that in a year of *nyuoc*, or high river-flood, their ridges remain dry

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whereas in a similar year Eastern Gaajok country is under water and cattle have to be sent into Lou country while the men fish from trees. Lou are very scornful of Eastern Jikany village sites. I once asked Wicthiel, who now lives at Mancom in Jikany country, whether he could call his present home a *gwaadh wec* (village site) and he replied "Well, it is what the Jikany call a *gwaagh wec*, but it is not what we consider a *gwaadh wec* in our own country (Lou). They just build their villages in the forest anyhow." Huts built on piles, such as one sees in parts of Dinkaland, are unknown in Nuerland.

Water is as scarce in the dry season as it is excessive in the wet season. About the beginning of December, therefore, the young men and some of the girls take most of the cattle to camps some miles from the villages and leave the rest of the women and the married men to harvest the second millet crop and repair huts and byres. A few lactating cows are left in the village to provide milk for the small children. The cattle are taken to camps partly to give them clean water and partly to pasture them. The grasses are burnt and some species spring up again a few days after they are fired. This is a good time for the cattle because they can move freely, the tall grasses which impeded them in the rains having been burnt, and because they can graze to their hearts' content on the tender young shoots.

Local conditions determine the time of leaving the village. In 1936 the first youths to take their cattle into camp from the village of Nyueny moved on November 13th, at the beginning of the Nuer month of *Kur*. This is much earlier than is usual for most villages and was due to lack of clean water at Nyueny and over-grazing of the pastures in the vicinity. The country around the village was all under water in the middle of October but was parched a month later. Most people do not move till the end of the month of *Kur* or the beginning of the month of *Tiop indit* (about the middle of December).

In Lou country the first camps are often made in thornwood forests near deep pools, but in parts of Nuerland, especially in the

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West, they are often made by streams for fishing. When the second harvest is reaped the cattle are brought back to the village to eat the millet stalks, if the camps are near. As pools dry up, or pasturage is exhausted, or the fishing becomes poor, the young men make new camps and several intermediate camps may be made before they move to their large annual camping grounds at the side of lakes or marshes or on river banks. The early camps are often small, being manned by a few kinsmen but tend to get larger as the season continues and water becomes scarcer. The final camps may contain several hundred persons. By the middle of January the villages in the Lou country are deserted but in areas more favoured with water supplies, for example in Lek country, some of the older people may still be in the villages in the middle of February.

The Lou people stay inland as long as they can and in a wet year may remain inland throughout the dry season. They fall back on the deeper pools, some large enough to be called lakes, which hold up the water in a stream or depression, *e.g.*, at Muŏt tŏt, Muot dit, Fading, Fadoi, Gwonggwong, Yollei, Tepjor and Nyerol. These pools supply them with abundant fish. If forced to leave them the Gun major tribal section moves north to the Sobat and south-west to the flooded plain of the Bahr el Zeraf in the country of the Twic Dinka (*loc Twini*) and the Mor major tribal section moves northeast to the Nyanding river or East to the Geni and Pibor rivers.

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In the old days fighting frequently occurred if the Lou moved to these camping sites because the banks of the Sobat belonged to the Balak people, while occupation of the Geni and Pibor brought them into contact with the Beir and Anuak peoples, and their move to the south-west was trespass on Dinka grazing grounds. Even the lower reaches of the Nyanding river do not belong to the Lou for the Gaajok have their villages along it and have fishing rights in its pools.

The Madjok villagers with whom I camped for several months at Yakwac in 1931 had moved to Pul Telă for an intermediate camp early in December and had reached Yakwac about the middle of

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the surface, the sand being deposited a little way from the mouth of the well. Steps are hollowed out on the opposite sides of the walls at intervals of about two feet. 312 332

When water is reached a thick coil of grass tied with twine is lowered to the worker at the bottom and he places it round the sides of the well from the basis to two or three feet up the walls. This is done to prevent sand from falling from the walls into the water. The water is about a foot deep and is clear and fresh.

The work of digging a well takes two or three days. Each *gol*, household, has its own well and each well is surrounded by several circular troughs. A trough (*pany*) is fashioned from the mud excavated from the well. It is about four feet in diameter having a wall a foot high. The wall and floor are pounded hard with a cow's horn, or a bone, to make the trough water-tight, and they are then coated with a layer of sand to keep the water clean and make it attractive to the cattle.

Watering cattle from wells is an unceasing labour. Cattle drink from the troughs as soon as they are loosened in the morning; they return from grazing at midday for another drink, and are watered a third time in the evening before being tethered. Therefore three times a day the troughs have to be filled by the slow process of drawing gourdfuls of water from the well, the gourds being weighted and let down with a cord, and of carrying them to the troughs. Men work late at night to fill the troughs for the morning drink and a large part of the mornings and afternoons are spent in preparing for the midday and evening drinks. 312 233.

To avoid confusion a man generally loosens a few of his cattle at a time so that they can drink their fill and then give place to others. While they are drinking their masters squat by the side of the trough to prevent any beast from putting its feet in the water and fouling it and to see that it does not damage the walls of the trough. If a cow puts its hoof on the wall or in the water he gives it a sharp rap on the leg with his club. The animals soon understand this rule and meekly circle round the trough, or kneel at the edge of the wall, to

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312 drink. Each beast also soon gets to know its special trough and
• 233 when loosened or when returning from pasture at once makes for it, though when the camp starts there is often confusion, for if an animal approaches a trough that does not belong to its master it is driven away by the owner of the trough and cows are thus driven from trough to trough till they discover the right one and join the other cattle of their household which are drinking there.

[578] On the arrival of a new household at the camp their kinsmen allow them to use their troughs till they have dug their own wells. Frequent disputes take place over wells for a man guards his water jealously. While I was at Yik several persons near Muŏt tŏt were killed in a fight that started in a dispute about wells.

A boy is placed on duty to watch the troughs all day long and often he plants a thorn bush in the bed of the river near his troughs and throws some grass on its branches so that he may have a little shade in the heat of the day. The lad's main duty is to prevent the sheep and goats from drinking water at the troughs reserved for the cattle for the cattle do not like drinking after them and they foul the water. Sheep and goats either have their own troughs or are allowed to drink when the cattle have had their fill. But as they graze unattended near the camp they may return at any time and try to drink from one of the cattle-troughs. A boy who allows sheep
[681 593] and goats belonging to another household to drink the water drawn for his father's cattle is in for a whipping from his elder brother. Even the crows are driven away from the precious water. The most other boys will do to warn a sleepy comrade that the water of his trough is being drunk is to sing out "*Caa lil o, caa lil*" and one constantly hears this refrain in the camp. When a boy sings this chant every lad looks to his troughs to make sure that it is not from them that water is being drunk.

312 No washing is allowed from the troughs and if a man wants a
[515] bath he must get a comrade to pour water over him at a well-side. Every care is taken to keep the water clean and the wells are frequently inspected. If the water is discoloured a man descends to the bottom,

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cleans it out, and rearranges the grass coil around the sides. The discoloured water is then drawn out in gourdfuls and thrown away. They continue drawing the water till they are satisfied that the well is clean again. Every day the walls of the trough receive a fresh coating of sand and are thus kept smooth and clean. All the work falls to the men and boys. Men, assisted by the bigger boys, dig the wells and make the troughs and draw the water. The smaller boys guard the water. Women and girls only draw water for household purposes. 312 312 462

There were dozens of wells at Yik, the bed of the river having been bored every few yards. As each well supplied two or three troughs the ground was covered with shiny pools. 312

X.

Water is the primary problem of the herdsman's life in Nuerland. A secondary problem, for it arises from excess or insufficiency of water, is pasturage. In their seasonal movements Nuer are not only seeking water but also nourishing grasses and when herdsmen take the cattle from camp to their grazing grounds they do not guide them haphazardly across the plain but drive them to where they know of succulent grasses. The best pastures are often far from camp and the cattle have to be milked early so that they may have time to graze, drink water, chew the cud, and graze again before returning to camp. It is necessary to herd the cattle in the dry season, but Nuer say that it is better to do so at all times of the year though they do not always act accordingly. When I brought one of my cows from Yakwac to Mancom early in the rains it was noticeably thinner than the Mancom cattle. The Mancom people said that the Yakwac cattle do not do so well as their own because the Yakwac people do not herd their cattle in the rains and take them to the best pastures but leave them to graze by themselves. Consequently they graze on the exhausted pasturage near the homesteads. At Mancom a man always accompanied the cattle and took them to the richest grasses. 233•

Nuer are great authorities on grasses and know all about their habits and distributions. They never make a mistake in identifying 824 233

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824 233 those grasses which are *wal ghok*, cattle-grasses, and those plants which are eaten regularly by cattle, sheep, and goats or are used for veterinary purposes. One is only given names of plants with hesitation or given different names by different persons when they have no 824 particular value or use. One should not, however, bring leaves and flowers home and ask a Nuer for the names, for this confuses him, but he knows them at once when he sees them growing, as he would normally see them. Not the form of the plant alone but its form together with its habitat enable him quickly to identify it, for some plants are found in gardens, others on sandy ridges, others in the open plain, and others near streams.

824 It is probable that Nuer expansion has to a considerable degree been influenced by the distribution of pasture grasses. I am not 167 a botanist and can only record a few of the main grasses which are 137 found in both Western and Eastern Nuerland without being able to give their distribution in these latitudes. However, Nuer have told me that the reason they did not oust the Ngok Dinka from their enclave was that their pastures are not up to the grazing standards Nuer demand for their cattle. It has also been pointed out to me by Nuer that Shillukland is very poor in grazing grasses, a statement which seems to me, from a very slight acquaintance with Shilluk country, to be true.

137 There are some Nuer grasses the cattle like, some they will eat if 233 they are hungry, and some which they refuse at all times. The richness of pasture varies at different times of the year and in different places and it is these seasonal and local variations which determine Nuer annual, and daily, movements.

132 In the season of *Rwil*, the springtime of the year when the early 137 rains fall, all the grasses either send up new shoots or begin to grow again after several months of arrested growth. This is a season of 233 fatness for the cattle. All the pasture grasses are short and tender and they can choose the most luscious of them and graze on them to their hearts' content. In this time of plenty they nibble the heads of the grasses of which they are not greatly fond while they graze to the ground a favourite grass like *gau* (*Andropogon Gayanus Kunth*).

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But when the rainy season (*tŏt*) is well advanced, grazing becomes more difficult, partly because the country is inundated and partly because some of the best grasses like *dut cieng nath* (*Echinochloa pyramidalis Hitchc. and Chase*) grow tall and rank and are no longer favoured by the cattle, though this particular grass which grows in the open plain and may, perhaps, be regarded as the characteristic grass of Western Nuerland, does not grow so coarse as many others and is the great stand-by of the cattle in a bad year. Other grasses which are eaten in the early rains but become too rank in the middle of the rains to appeal to the cattle are *dik* (*Sorghum dimidiatum stapf*), *dinding* (*Ischaemum brachyatherum Fenzl*), both grasses of the open plains, *yiu* (*Rottboellia exaltata L.f.*), which is found mainly away from streams and grows best on sandy ridges, and when full-grown is covered with spines on account of which it is also called *lep yang*, 'cow's tongue;' and *yuol* (*Pennitetum ramosum Schweinf.*) a grass of the open plains which has spiky heads that when it is full grown, run into the eyes of the cattle and make them sore so that they have to be bathed.

Therefore at the height of the rains, especially in a flood year, grazing is often a serious problem and cattle have to rely largely on the short grasses of the village ridges. This is where Lou country has an advantage over the Eastern Jikany districts and why many villages in Western Nuerland are so well placed. Such grasses are *jual jok* 'dog's tail' (*Setaria pallide-fusca Stapf and Hubbard*), and *bogh* (*Eriochloa nubica Hack. and Stapf.*), neither of which cattle relish, though *bogh* is eaten avidly by goats and sheep. Another ridge grass is *muŏth* (*Cynodon Dactylon Pero.*). These grasses are supplemented by grasses of the open plains that grow at the foot of the ridges, particularly *dut cieng nath*, and have been beaten down by rain. In those parts of Nuerland which are not favoured by wide ridges the cattle may starve in a year of very high flood.

Early in the season of *jiom*, the windy season that succeeds the rains and is the first part of the dry season, the grasses dry up and seed. It is not a good time for the cattle since the tall grasses impede their movement, no longer provide succulent pasturage, and may

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shelter beasts of prey. Nuer hasten to burn them as soon as they are dry enough, usually in the latter part of November and in the early part of December. If they are fired too early they are only half burnt and though new shoots spring up the old charred stems remain standing.

Some grasses which cattle eat in the wet season fail to come up after firing till the following rains. Such are *wal* (or *dut*) *lony*, 'lion's grass' which grows in the open plains; an excellent grazing grass called *gogh* (*Brachiaria obtusiflora Stapf*). also of the open plains and favouring shallow depressions; *töl muoth*, also of the open plains and good pasture in the rainy season.

Other grasses send up tender young shoots a few days after they are burnt. Probably this is due to their long roots which tap water held up in the clay beds and it may be partly due also to their clump formation which protects the core of the plants from the flames. If it were not for the fact that some grasses send up new shoots after firing it would be difficult for the cattle to survive. It would, I think, be impossible for them to survive inland in a dry year. Some of the main grasses which come up again, though they do not grow till the next rains, are *twät* (*sporobolus pyramidalis Beauv.*), a grass found mainly near sandy ridges and not greatly favoured by the cattle; *ghol* (*Setaria sp.*) which also the cattle do not much care for; *riëth* (*Setaria Lynesii Stapf and Hubbard*) a grass found mainly along shallow depressions; and *gau*. But the two grasses mainly to be depended on, and both much eaten by cattle, are *dut cieng nath* and a very tall grass, found near streams and pools, called *dut in lum* or *dut jaangni*. Some of the grasses which come up again grow near village sites and are therefore of little use because the cattle are in camps in the open plains, *e.g.*, *twät* and *ghöl*. It seems to depend to some extent on the amount of rainfall to what extent grasses send up shoots and in a very dry year grasses which would in a wet year send up shoots may not do so.

After the grasses have been burnt the cattle have a good time as they can wander as they please, being no longer impeded by surface

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water or rank vegetation, and as they can graze on the tender shoots. But when the dry season advances pasture becomes scarcer but cattle can graze again over the shoots. Eventually, however, they have to fall back on marsh grasses, especially in a dry year when such grasses of the plains as *dut cieng nath* may fail (it is said *ce tör* or *ce juac tör*). Nuer then make for rivers, swamps, lagoons, and deep marshy depressions where they can always find enough vegetation to keep the cattle alive. The chief marsh grasses are *poon* (*Onyza Barthi A. cheval*), *giëk*, *buogh*, and *kuth yang*. Nuer say that no grasses give more milk than these if the cows can obtain them in abundance.

Cattle also eat a number of plants and these are a useful addition to their diet. A good number of such plants, however, grow in cultivations and are therefore not accessible to the cattle, but some spring up in old garden sites and in the neighbourhood of habitations. Nevertheless cattle are grass grazers and it is mainly sheep and goats which graze on plants, and they eat also the leaves of young trees. Goats will eat almost anything but sheep are daintier feeders and will not touch some of the bitter plants and shrubs that goats devour. The plants eaten by sheep or goats, or by both, generally grow in old cultivations or on old homestead and camp sites. Some of those recorded are *Cak*, ' milk,' so-called because it oozes out a thick white juice when cut, *tiltil* (*Boerhaaira repens L.*) another plant called *tiltil* (*Indigofera Sp.*), *Wangrial* (*Justicia matammensis* (*Schwenf*) *oliv.*), *nār yiauwa* (*Emilia sagittata DC*), *mut ngai*, ' spear of the francolin ' (*schleria foliosa A. Rich.*), *wöör* (*Portulaca Quadrifida L.*), *kutkakdeel* (*Glycine Borianii Bak*), *tac* (*Ipomoea replans Poir*), *pac* (*Urochloa s:.*), *nyiök indil pin*, *tiecdong* (*cyperus rotundus L.*), *tiec*, *belagak gordet*, *kër jaakoah* (' crow's pumpkins '), *thil in cöt*, etc., etc.

XI.

Besides having to adapt themselves to conditions of water supply and vegetation Nuer have to adjust themselves to conditions of insect-life which is an ever-present obstacle to cattle husbandry in their country. The cattle get no rest from stinging flies and ticks from

morn till nightfall and in the rainy season they are menaced by mosquitos as soon as the sun sets.

When the rains commence the cattle are taken back to the permanent villages and, as mosquitos become numerous, they are milked towards sunset and then at once tethered in the byres, the doors being closed after them. In the centre of each byre a huge fire of dried dung sends out clouds of smoke so dense that it is impossible for a European to remain there for several minutes. One cannot even see the cattle. One can only hear their movements as they chew the cud (*nyŏk*) and change their position. The smoke and heat are so oppressive that I have often wondered how either Nuer or their cattle survive the atmosphere night after night. Young men sleep on a platform above the fire and if the smoke becomes less dense one of them descends to stir up the fire and pile on more dung, for as soon as the smoke beings to clear—it escapes through the thatched roof—mosquitos enter. When the cattle are brought into the kraal before sunrise they are sleepy. I suppose that they have not had a very restful night in the stifling atmosphere of the byres. Nuer realize that the heat and smoke of the byres are bad for the cattle but they consider that mosquitos are worse. At the end of the rainy season and at the commencement of the dry season they leave the cattle outside till they go to bed themselves. Then they have to shut them in the byres because they would inevitably be devoured by lions if left all night unguarded in the kraals. They do not make up the fires so high at this time of the year for after the first millet harvest has been reaped mosquitos are far less numerous near the villages, since there is now no standing water and the grasses have been close-cropped on the ridges by the flocks and herds. Later those who still remain in the villages often erect windscreens in the kraals and spend the night with the cattle outside.

The worst months for mosquitos are July, August and September, when there is surface water and when the millet crop is well grown, for swarms of mosquitos shelter beneath the broad leaves of the millet during the heat of the day. As soon as the sun sets one hears Nuer slapping mosquitoes on their bodies as they sit by the kraal

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fires, but they are quickly driven into huts and byres to seek protection amid the smoke of their fires. The doors of the huts are closed tightly, air-holes are blocked, and fires are lit. Mosquito-nets are the only European product, apart from spears, for which the Nuer express any great enthusiasm, but very few, perhaps one in several thousand, possess them.

During my residence at Mancŏm on the Sobat in July, 1935 I was almost eaten alive by mosquitos. My cotton mosquito house afforded me some protection at night but insects soon made holes in it and the mosquitos entered. Moreover, they swarmed outside like a beleaguering army and on my leaving or entering the house battalions invaded it. The worst time was between six and nine o'clock in the morning when hundreds of mosquitos collected in my tent to escape the sun so that it was impossible to sit in it without being repeatedly bitten. One gets little rest, and fever is sooner or later inevitable.

Mosquitos are absent away from pools and river banks in the dry season and even in the vicinity of water—and one must live near water—they are not troublesome from January to May. In the dry season, therefore, the cattle sleep in the open, the herd being surrounded by windscreens in which the Nuer themselves sleep. If a beast of prey approaches people know of its approach by observing that the cattle are restless. The alarm is given and in a moment the whole camp is awake and men rush, with spears in their hands, to the place of danger. I have seen camps awake half the night chasing lions away, for a lion makes many attempts before he acknowledges defeat. But even in the dry season dung fires envelope the camps in smoke at night to protect the cattle from insects.

According to the Nuer it was Woman who first brought mosquitos to the habitations of men. Woman found Mosquito in the open plain and asked him " What do you eat ? " Mosquito replied, " Oh ! grass. Just nothing." Woman said to him, " Well come home with me and we will share our homestead together " When God heard Woman's words he asked her, " What about your husband ? " Woman replied,

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"Oh! He can brush away Mosquito with a bird's wing." God said, "All right." For the first few days Man brushed mosquitos aside. Then he found that it was useless so he suffered them.

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Another unpleasant insect pest is the seroot fly (*rōm*). Seroot are seasonal. They flourish on cloudy days from May to July. I have not seen them in this latitude from the end of July to the beginning of May. When I was at Konye in May and at Yakwac in July they appeared in swarms every morning shortly before the cattle were driven to pasture, between 9 and 9.30 a.m. At the same hour every morning I was driven from my tent by their painful stings. Fortunately when the cattle go to pasture the seroot flies accompany them. On most mornings at Konye about two hours after being driven to pasture the herd came stampeding back kicking their legs and lashing out with their tails and dung fires had to be lit in the kraal to protect them. There was no need to tether the cattle for they were only too grateful to be allowed to stand near the fires and let the smoke envelope them. Only when there was a shower of rain did they get any relief in the pastures, for rain drives seroot away. On cloudy rainless days the poor beasts ran back to the village covered with seroot and their flanks stained with blood. On such days they were not able to graze for more than two or three hours.

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By August the seroot has gone but the stumoxis (*waih*) remains. It is a small black biting fly which is present in the rains and, I think, in the dry season also. It is probably responsible for the presence of trypanosómiasis in parts of Nuerland, transferring the trypanosomes directly on its proboscis from beast to beast, for the tsetse (*mi* or *luk liec*) does not occur in Nuerland, except perhaps in parts of Eastern Gaajak country, which I have not visited, though its lethal character is well known to Nuer. Indeed they have probably had to take it into account in their expansion eastwards for there can be little doubt that the main reason for their evacuation of Anuakland, which they conquered as far as the foothills of the Abyssinian escarpment was the loss of their cattle from trypanosomiasis carried by tsetse, which occupy a belt of country at the foot of the escarpment whenever dense forest occurs.

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There are other insect pests beside mosquitos, seroot and stumoxis, which annoy the cattle though whether any of them carry disease in this latitude is unknown. The eight-legged cattle ticks (*cak*) attach themselves so firmly to the dewlap, brisket, chest, belly, and udder that their blood-bloated bodies have to be sharply tugged if they are to be dislodged. Nuer remove them frequently in the evenings but not often enough and not systematically enough. There is another insect called *tharkwac* which is said to live on the bodies of cattle though its bite does not cause bleeding.

Personally, of all the insects that abound in African luxuriance in Nuerland I hate most the ordinary black fly, which is like our house fly in appearance. Nuer do not pay much regard to it and they are doubtless less objectionable to the cattle than most insects, though they worry them a good deal in hot weather. These flies settle on one and drive one crazy from dawn till sunset. On trek one is accompanied by an attendant swarm round one's head and shoulders. They do not seem to mind travelling any distance. When one is seated they settle persistently on the exposed parts of one's body. When one is eating they get in the food. All day long one is brushing them away. Their most annoying habit is experienced at sunset when they seek some cavity in one's body in which to spend the night, selecting the ears, nostrils, and eyes for this purpose. They are worst in the middle of the dry season for wet and cold keep them away—probably kill them off—to some extent in the rains and in the windy season that succeeds the rains. In the dry season they are sometimes intolerable. When I was encamped at Mankac and Biel on the Nyanding River there was very little water, and that fouled, in the pools, and the cattle were dying daily of rinderpest. A man might have thought that every fly in the world had come to live around the pools and to feed on carcases and excreta. In my more bitter moments I used to think of Nuerland as a land where the first mosquitos begin to bite one's legs as the last flies crawl into one's ears and nostrils.

While I am recalling my own experiences of insects I will mention in conclusion the red soldier ants (mörmör). I have only seen these

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136 ants in the wooded area near the junction of the Sobat and the Nyanding Rivers and they may be regarded as uncommon in Nuerland, since they are probably found only where there is fairly thick forest. They sometimes get into the byres and the cattle have to be taken outside while efforts are made to drive them away with ashes. When they invaded my camp our efforts were unavailing. We fought them for five days with fire and ashes and water and, though it was the worst time of the year for mosquitos, I was compelled to sleep the last three nights in a deck-chair surrounded by a ring of fire. On the sixth day we gave up the struggle and broke camp.

114 I have ventured to give some of my own experiences because one of the great difficulties of working as an anthropologist, or indeed in any other capacity, in Nuerland, is the constant irritation caused by insects and the exhaustion and sickness that finally ensue. To • 233 appreciate what the Nuer have to endure it is well to endure for a while the same torments. While their cattle have to live in such conditions the breed cannot well be improved and the milk yield increased, for they never get any real rest and the continual irritation caused them by insects must greatly lower their vitality and render them an easy prey to disease. In the circumstances their hardiness and endurance is remarkable.

XII.

232 Having had no veterinary training I cannot list all the diseases from which cattle suffer in Nuerland. The most serious scourge is certainly rinderpest (*nyapec, nyapec Deang, nyanjut munnyuac*).

The usual name in most parts of Nuerland is *nyapec*. It is given a female name because of the supposed female properties of serious epidemics. Similarly, severe cases of smallpox are spoken of as female and light cases as male. A Nuer, with whom Miss Soule was once discussing rinderpest, when asked by her why it had a feminine prefix replied, "Would any man do such a thing as to kill all the cattle?" The wild dog is called *jiok nyapec* and I have been told that it is so called because wild dogs brought rinderpest to the cattle (*caa nyapec noong dōōr e ken*).

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232 Nuer know no way of combating rinderpest once it has attacked a herd but they are aware that an infected herd must be isolated. The Lou along the Sobat River in 1931 did their best to prevent any cattle from moving across their grazing grounds from infected districts and seemed well aware that the disease is carried on the hooves of cattle. They may have gained this knowledge from Europeans but Jackson records as early as 1924, when contact with Europeans was very slight: "Diseased skins are sold to the pedlars (Arabic speaking traders from the northern Sudan) who wander through their country. To this fact the Nuer themselves attribute the widespread disease that has taken enormous toll of their herds during the past few years. It is also interesting to note that they believe the disease to be carried on the hooves of the pedlars' donkeys.....The Jekaing, however, in the Bahr el Ghazal Province (Western Jikany) make such stringent quarantine regulations that if a man is known to have eaten of an animal that has died of cattle plague he is not allowed in a district free of the disease."

232 Nuer also try to protect their cattle by splitting up the herd, especially in the dry season, so that if rinderpest breaks out in some 233 districts and is not carried to every district, only part of the herd is affected. Thus a man may keep some of his cattle in camp at the inland pool of *Mwöt dit* while his son takes two or three animals to the Geni River and one or two cows are placed with a relative-in-law in Gaawär country or in the Dinka swamps. Likewise many men who camp on the Sobat leave some of their cattle at inland pools at Nyarol.

232 Nuer are aware that if an animal recovers from rinderpest it is immune from future attacks and greatly value such beasts. They are also aware that immunity of a cow does not mean immunity for its calves.

Rinderpest causes havoc among the herds and it is a bitter experience to live among the Nuer when their cattle are infected. They can only look on helplessly, more morose and resigned than ever, while it destroys some two thirds of their beasts. Youths see

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221 Hunger is partly responsible for the low pulse of life at this season. As has been explained, Nuer cultivate little and in most districts, especially in Lou country, they have to husband their grain if it is not to be exhausted long before the new harvest has ripened. They leave most of the grain in their wet season villages for seed and to support themselves during the hungry weeks that last from sowing to harvest time. They do not carry much millet to the camps so that they have to use it sparingly, though, if the camps are only a day or two away from the villages, women will sometimes return to get further supplies from the village granaries. When the dry season is well advanced the cows often cannot obtain sufficient pasturage of a nourishing quality and give little milk. Those Nuer who camp at the edge of inland pools and lagoons can supplement their diet with fish, but on the Sobat we only had what few fish boys could spear in the shallows and the yield of harpooning from our single canoe. From time to time members of our camp managed to kill wild beasts: gazelle, cob, tiang and giraffe. Otherwise our meat supply was limited to an occasional ox or cow which died and to blood from the necks of cows.

805 Camp life is regulated by requirements of the cattle and Nuer
•233 speak of periods of the day by reference to pastoral tasks rather than to the course of the sun, *e.g.*, they say that they will do something at the time of milking, or after the cattle are driven to pasture, or when the calves return to camp. The camp time-table varies little from day to day. It is approximately as follows:—

512 A.M.
234 6.00 Everybody rises.
6.45 The cows are milked.
8.00 The cattle are driven to pasture, the kraal is cleaned and the morning meal is served.
8.15 Goats and sheep are milked and taken to pasture.

P.M.
4.30 Calves, sheep and goats are brought back to camp.
5.00 Cows which have recently calved come running home.
5.30 The herd returns and the cows are milked.
7.30 The evening meal is served.

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361 or dearth of pasturage, the people remain on their village sites or move only a short distance from them, they insist on making a camp nearby, for such is the ancient dry-season custom.

342 The windscreen (*geau*) does not seem to be used in Western Nuerland. In the camps I have seen there both sexes live in grass huts plastered with dung, the huts of married couples being rather larger than those occupied by youths or girls. The huts appear also to be more carefully constructed than in Eastern Nuerland. In
343 Nuer camps one sometimes sees a rough shelter (*geau deeni*) constructed of branches with grass, often the riverside *buor*, thrown on top to give shade for the young calves during the heat of the day. Otherwise they are taken into the huts or tethered beneath a tree.

•233 In the front of the windscreens are tethered the cattle. When they are grazing the kraal is a circle studded with pegs and sprinkled with drying dung. When they come back in the evening they are tethered to these pegs. Adult cattle are placed in the centre of the kraal, the calves on the outside nearest to the windscreens where they are under the watchful eyes of their owners, and the sheep and goats in small clusters here and there between the adult cattle and the calves. Oxen of enormous size, with great spreading horns trained into artificial shapes, stand docile and lethargic, prominent among the other cattle. A man places his favourite ox in a line with the entrance to his windscreen so that he can see it without moving.

234 Before and during milking youths display themselves in company
883 with their favourite oxen. Boys lead the oxen round the camp and their young owners walk behind them brandishing their spears and leaping gracefully into the air, shouting and singing the while. This display is called *rau* and is one of the customs of dry season camps. It is not practised in wet season villages because a youth does not show off before his own family but when he has a large audience, including girls whose favours he wishes to win. Youths often continue to display themselves till the cattle are driven to pasture.

234 Milking starts between 6-30 and 7-00. If the morning is misty
462 it may be delayed till slightly later. As men are forbidden to milk

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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they sit in their windscreens while the women and boys milk the cows. This task takes about half an hour and the cattle then remain for a while tethered to their pegs. Each household milks its own cows and if there are strong boys and girls they do most of the work, leaving the married women to cook and attend to their babies, but adult women milk troublesome cows which require experience and firm handling and if they have no adolescent sons and daughters have to milk all the cows of their household.

Between 7-30 and 8-0 the cattle are taken to pasture. If some of the beasts are loosened before milking is finished they do not leave the herd but wait nearby the kraal till they are driven out with the herd. By this time the sun is high in the heavens. When there is good pasturage near the camp they may not be loosened till 9-0—10-0 o'clock because they will have plenty of time to eat their fill before sunset. Mr. Corfield tells me that they are generally taken to pasture at this late hour among the Eastern Jikany whose country is not so arid as that of the Lou. I gathered from statements of Western Nuer that in their country it is customary for the cattle to be loosened even later in the day.

No one gives an order for the cattle to be loosened but when all the cows have been milked someone begins to loosen his cattle and the others follow suit, the oxen being loosened last. The herdsmen for the day take them out of the kraal. Usually several men accompany the cattle for a short distance but some of these return to camp and only two or three men spend the day with them in the grazing grounds. Each household in turn provides a herdsman and the men who herded the cattle today arrange with others to herd them tomorrow. The adult occupants of each windscreen must take their turns as herdsmen. After being loosened, some beasts make at once for nearby water while others wait till they have reached their grazing grounds and drink there, for, about midday, the herdsmen accompany them to a pool. If water is near the cattle make their way to it, but if it is distant they have to be driven there. Herding is considered a hardship and is conducted by young adults. They have to keep a close watch over the cattle during the heat of the day in case they wander and

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233 512 [533] they may have to defend them against carnivorous beasts and human raiders. Often they relieve the monotony and solitude by composing and chanting songs. Nuer say that most songs are invented in the grazing grounds. Herdsmen have a quick meal before leaving camp [264] and, except when there are plenty of *heglig* fruits in the early part of the dry season, they will not have another bite till after sunset. However hungry he might feel no herdsman would milk a cow.

512 462 234 237 After the cattle have left camp the day is closed for the men, as far as routine cattle tasks are concerned, till they are brought back to the kraal in the evening; but women and boys continue their labours. Women milk the goats and sheep and prepare the morning meal. Boys spread out the cattle dung that has collected overnight so that it may dry in the sun and furnish fuel to replenish the household fires at night. They also smooth the part of the kraal occupied by their beasts by rubbing over the earth the nightly residue of ashes, urine, and dung. Boys assist in milking the goats and in taking the small calves to shade. They then take the larger calves and the [233] flocks to pasture. Older boys herd the calves and younger boys look after the flocks in the vicinity of the kraal. They spend most of the day playing games. If a small boy is hungry he catches a she-goat [857] and milks it, holding it by the horns with one hand while he pats its udder and squeezes its teats with the other hand from which he then licks the milk. Or he may suckle it. People do not object to small boys milking the goats they are herding. They are small and hungry and need all the food they can get to grow into strong men.

512 462 224 Not all the adult men have been idle while their womenfolk and the boys have been cleaning the kraal and milking. On most mornings parties of two and three leave camp at dawn with their dogs to pick up a gazelle or other small animal. They do not return to camp till after milking is finished, and those who set out at dawn to inspect their giraffe traps return about the same time. After the cattle have been loosened the men potter about for a couple of hours. Generally some of them are engaged in making utensils and ornaments or in dressing their hair.

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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512 226 883 About noon youths and maidens bathe in the river wherever a shallow sandy stretch offers a clear playground. They do the same at inland lakes but much time is there given also to fishing. The young people sit and splash in the water and the sexes flirt and wrestle in and out of the water. At about 2.30 they return to the camp where the girls churn the morning milk and pound and grind millet for the evening meal. The men turn over the drying dung with their sticks and then, having nothing more they need attend to, most of them return to their windscreens though one or two youths may try and spear fish in the shallows and they are joined there by older boys who are not herding the calves.

512 233 237 372 About 4-30 p.m. the small calves are brought from the shade where they have spent the day and are tethered in the kraal. The men hold them between their legs and lifting up their heads compel them to swallow water. At this time the boys bring back the larger calves and goats and sheep from grazing. Members of each household tether their animals. Generally one or two men now go out to meet (*luor*) the returning herd. Others gather the dried dung on hides from the heaps into which boys have swept it, and each owner of a windscreen makes up the evening fire on his hearth. There is no need to light the fires as they have been smouldering all day long and it is only necessary to clear away surface ashes and heap the new fuel on the exposed embers. Dense clouds of smoke arise and envelope the camp.

512 233 462 264 By 5 o'clock cows which have recently calved come running home and herald the approach of the herd which appears from 15 to 30 minutes later. Adult men tether the cattle of their household and women and boys commence at once to milk the cows and they finish this work before sunset. The women then prepare the evening meal and finish their dairy work. The men sit in their windscreens and await the meal which is served between 7 and 8 p.m. Nuer eat twice a day: in the morning and in the evening. The evening meal consists of millet porridge, with cheese or butter, or both, poured over it. The morning meal is generally the remains of supper heated up or with hot milk poured over it.

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vary much from month to month for there are few seasonal changes at this time of the year. As the river falls it is possible to fish in lagoons and shallows and to bathe on its sandy bed. Then the lagoons dry up. When the river rises fish swim in the weeds and rushes and along some streams they are easily speared from the banks. The banks of the Sobat are too steep for this purpose. There are no longer shallows and bathing is a hasty dip for there is danger from crocodiles. The grazing grounds are changed from time to time as they become exhausted and as streams and lagoons dry up. At Yakwac there was succulent pasturage only where marsh plants still retained their moisture at the river end of lagoons. The people are still in camp when the first rains fall at the end of April or early in May and then there is everywhere an abundance of pasturage. The brown bush becomes green and the baked fissured earth a sodden mire. Dry lagoons become inland flowing streams. The scorching sun is clouded.

On the Sobat we guessed that the first rains had fallen inland by the migration of wild animals from its banks. Giraffe now left us for inland pastures where they would not have to face death every time they approached the river. Other animals likewise moved southwards, even the gazelle. On the northern bank, however, buffaloes still came to the river to drink and were attacked by hungry Nuer. Animals and men must obey the seasons and when there is no water except in inland lakes and lagoons, men, cattle, and wild beasts must drink at the same places. One can hear them at night cautiously coming to the pools to drink. When the rains come all leave for new pastures.

In May one knows that the move back to the wet season villages will shortly take place not only by cloudy skies and movements of game, but also by camp activities. The women are the first to leave camp and one meets them along paths, carrying their household goods in rectangular cane baskets. Youths leave camp early in the morning to cut stakes, generally of thornwood (*bwan*) and they spend a large part of the day shaping them into tethering pegs. They also twist new cord. The weather being cooler people do not feel so keenly the need to sleep towards noon. Everyone is becoming restless and

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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and well beyond the limits of the reciprocal distribution of bridewealth cattle, but I do not wish to exaggerate the extent or effectiveness of economic reciprocity in the kinship system. In the past as well as the present, grain and other food were bartered for cattle, other animal stock, and other commodities, and there was considerable trade, which increased in volume in years of famine. Nowadays, with the introduction of a money economy, grain is bought with cash either from other Nuer or from Arab merchants, who, sponsored by the Government, often import large quantities to meet local shortages.

A stranger cannot intrude himself into a community or build his house and clear his fields without its acceptance. Not only will objections be raised which might lead to his ejection, but he could not hope to gain full membership of the community and the advantages which follow. This does not, however, usually arise because strangers are nearly always a welcome addition to the community, which thereby gains in strength, and because the newcomer can nearly always claim some previous link arising from kinship, marital ties, or at any rate close friendship (*math*), with one or more members of that community. In any case a form of social relationship will be forged in the passage of time by intermarriage and adoption into the lineage structure of the community. A change of residence, if it is permanent, means also a change of social and political affiliation.

For these reasons, because crop production is not an important feature of their economy, at any rate in many parts of Nuerland, and because, despite the obvious limitations of flood-free land, there is no great shortage, there are no complex laws of land tenure. Disputes are rare, and still more rarely taken before the courts.[1] Thus, though circumstances may change with the development of agricultural enterprise, land tenure is not at present an important or well-defined feature of Nuer customary law.

Grazing Rights

During the rains the cattle are kept in the permanent settlements and quartered in cattle-byres (*luak*), each family unit having its own. The *luak* is the centre of the family group consisting of the head of the family and his wives, who, each with her children, occupy separate huts which are clustered around it. Grazing is used communally by all members of the settlement, and although pastures are limited, especially at the height of the rains, and although there may be periodic shortages when the cattle lose condition, no more precise division of the territory is necessary. Disputes rarely, if ever, arise, and in the herding of cattle the members of one settlement are united by common

[1] The only form of dispute commonly brought before the courts concerns 'animal trespass', where straying cattle, sheep, or goats damage the crops of neighbours. Compensation is often awarded in such cases.

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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interests. In most parts of Nuerland too the nature of the terrain—isolated outcrops of flood-free ground often widely separated—usually precludes the possibility of clashes between different settlements. Likewise when the rains cease the cattle are widely dispersed in small camps over the 'intermediate' plains. There is no shortage and no need for a clear demarcation of boundaries between the units of one community, or between different communities coming from different settlements.

As the dry season advances, when the 'intermediate' grasses become unpalatable and water supplies run short, concentration increases, and the small camps join together in larger ones in the *toic*. Cattle-camps with five or six thousand animals are not uncommon, and often there are many of such camps clustered along the banks of a river or watercourse in one region. More careful regard for rights in these pastures and in the fisheries which go with them may be necessary if disputes are to be avoided. Yet there is usually plenty of grazing, though this varies according to prevailing climatic conditions. In one year the river may be low and the rains light, with the result that the Nuer must penetrate farther into the riverain marshes; in another, a high river level may limit their movements to the fringes. Both circumstances may result in shortages, and something between the two extremes is probably the ideal; but many Nuer tribes have alternative grazing grounds which are utilized in varying proportions according to the year. For example, the Dok and Jagei Nuer can use the marshes of the Bahr el Jebel in a year when that river is low and much of the flood-plain uncovered, or they can move to the pastures of the Bilnyang system, which are produced partly by water spilling from the main river, and partly by water draining from a different catchment area. Some Nuer tribes do not have these advantages; in some areas periodic plagues of biting flies or mosquitoes, whose incidence also obviously varies with different climatic conditions, prevent the full utilization of their summer grazing grounds. Generally speaking, there are rarely acute shortages, and even in the *toic* the boundaries between tribes or tribal segments need not be closely guarded.

In certain circumstances, however, such boundaries become essential, and their infringement may then cause disputes, which often result in violence and bloodshed. Sometimes there is an unusual shortage both of grazing grasses and water-points, and people who have normally tolerated the intrusion of outsiders less favourably provided than themselves, turn upon them and demand their withdrawal. Again, an epidemic of some contagious disease such as rinderpest or contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia makes quarantine and segregation of the herds essential. Fear of the spread of disease compels the owners to guard their boundaries more closely. To bring contaminated cattle into an area recognized as the exclusive right of other segments, and

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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423 233 361 578

where strangers are only allowed on sufferance, is a particularly serious infringement of grazing rights, and one which raises a storm of protest quickly followed by blows. Disputes of this nature do not usually start on a tribal scale; the initial quarrel arises between two adjacent cattle-camps near the boundaries, but feelings of indignation may extend along the lines of segmentation until two large segments or even two tribes are ranged against each other. Rights in grazing are recognized and follow the lines of the segmentary system, but are not a constant source of friction. Violation of these rights in years when it was necessary to guard them almost invariably led to hostilities in the past. Nowadays, though fights are not infrequent and boundary disputes are a common cause of blood-feuds, disputes of this nature are often settled peacefully in the courts.

Water Rights

423 233 312

Rights in watering places cannot be treated except in relation to grazing. In the dry season it is the availability of water which largely determines the extent to which certain pastures within the territory of the tribe or the tribal segment are used. This applies particularly to those Nuer tribes who are unable to reach perennial rivers like the Zeraf, Bahr el Jebel, or Sobat. Disputes over pools, especially in dry years when they dry out early in the year, often arise and may lead to blood[illegible]d. Water rights, however, follow the same principles which govern the division of territory according to the segmentation of tribal structure. Shallow wells are sometimes sunk, and are the property of the individual who digs them, but subject always to his obligation to share with his kinsmen and neighbours.

Fishing Rights and Hunting Rights

423 226

Fishing rights go with the divisions of territory in which the fish pools are situated and are guarded with perhaps a greater intensity of feeling than are rights in land. Fishing in the riverain area is essentially a dry season occupation, and there are fishing pools or stretches of shallow rivers and watercourses attached to and situated within grazing areas. Fishing is also a collective activity, and the right of the individual is limited by his membership of the tribal segment to which the pool belongs. Fishing again depends largely on the climatic conditions prevailing. A season of heavy rainfall followed by an abrupt drop in levels in the rivers and their tributaries is usually the ideal. Fish have been able to move far upstream during the rains, but are prevented from returning to the deeper waters of the main channels and are concentrated in depressions and pools shallow enough for the people to spear them. In such circumstances fish are not scarce, and pools

9:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1936 FJ22 Nuer FJ22

836 883 in sexual relations with girls. Before initiation boys may go to dances but they merely watch and do not take part in them After initiation they go with the other youths of the village and form part of the dancing group of their lineage (*dep*). When the dancing is over they seize the hands of the girls and sit and flirt with them. A boy will now commence permanent love affairs with girls, and a girl will be recognised by his friends as his love (*lumde*). No uninitiated boy would stand a chance of having a relationship of this kind with a girl, however large he might be, as she would merely laugh at him and call him a boy and tell him to go and become initiated. It is true that boys before initiation will have congress with small girls, but this is not socially recognised, and if his elders hear of it they will tell him not to be a fool as he is only a boy, but after initiation it is not only none of their business what he does, but also he is expected, nay, compelled, by custom to embark upon courtship.

411 884 421 An initiated boy is now invested with two external signs of manhood besides the scars on his forehead. He is given a spear by his father and also a bullock, which he had generally been promised before the operation If he is lucky he will also get a bullock from a maternal or paternal uncle. A boy will seldom possess a spear of his own and if he carries one he will almost certainly be found to have borrowed it from a relative though he may become the owner of a fishing spear. The possession of a spear is a sign of manhood and it is an object of great pride. One is surprised at the real feeling a Nuer expresses for his spear, almost as though it were animate and not a mere weapon. He is never tired of sharpening and polishing it. It is always in his hand, not only when fighting, hunting and travelling, but also when dancing, leaping behind his bullocks, playing with his comrades, and even when he lays it down it is never far from his side. As the Nuer possess no knives a man's spear does service not only on those occasions when Africans generally make use of it, but on those occasions when other peoples use a knife, for culinary purposes, cutting leather in tether making, cutting ox's hide for a bed-rug, and other purposes.

233 554 553 421 A boy is even prouder when he becomes the owner of a bullock and is invested with a bullock name. Even a small boy will speak of his father's bullocks as "our bullocks," and will often regard one of them, the calf of the cow he habitually milks, as his own special one. But it is only his in the general psychological sense of family communism. It

9:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1936 FJ22 Nuer FJ22

is not exclusively his and he cannot use it in the way in which bullocks are used for display. Also a boy will often take a bullock name from one of the animals in his father's herd to which he has taken a fancy, again generally the calf of the cow he milks every day, but this is only in imitation of his elders when playing with other boys in make believe of adult life. He has no right to the name and no man would address him by it nor would he mention it in the presence of his elders. But after initiation he has a bullock and a bullock name in his own full social right.

I have already mentioned how he will play with this bullock, and look after it, and sing about it. Undoubtedly a man feels much attachment to the animal and is very much upset at its death. I do not, however, consider this attachment to be like the sentimental attachment which Europeans often feel for a favourite dog or horse. Their feeling springs mainly, I believe, from the association of social prestige which the bullock brings to its owner. It is a shame if one has no bullock to display when one's comrades are having theirs lead in procession round the camp. The more bullocks one can put into these processions the greater the prestige of one's name, for a man with several bullocks is obviously a man of wealth and standing, while a man who has not even a single one is of the poorest of the poor. Even if we also take into account the ritual use of bullocks as a sacrificial medium between men and spirits and ghosts, I still think that there has been a tendency to exaggerate the emotional feeling of Nilotes towards particular animals. If a bullock dies its owner will acquire a new one and will take a new bullock name if he cares to do so. He may at any time change his bullock name if a new animal takes his fancy, though people generally seem to keep to the name they took after initiation. During his lifetime a man possesses a great number of bullocks and when he is married he will part with some of them, while others will be handed over to assist relatives to marry or to pay blood-compensation and yet others will be killed on ceremonial occasions. Nuer are never tired of speaking of these bullocks and enumerating their points. Much more could be said on the subject, but as it is only incidental to the institution of age-sets it cannot be discussed here in its completeness.

A man acquires a bullock name at initiation from the animal given to him by his father. He will be addressed by this name by his age-mates—it is particularly their privilege to do so—but also the members

12:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1930-1931) 1933
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Little harm is done whichever way we speak of them so long as we clearly define what we refer to at the outset. The point to remember is that "tribe" among the Nuer is a relative term and that what we speak of as a tribe to-day may not be one in our sense to-morrow. I have even been told (by Cuol, the Government interpreter at Nasser) that there was no *cut* between Yol and Wangkac primary sections of the Gaajok tribe. He told me that there used to be blood-compensation between these two sections till so many people on either side were killed that it ceased to function. It is clear, if this is the case, that "tribe" must be relative, and to some degree an arbitrary and *ad hoc* term. The only difference between the nomenclature used in this paper and that usually employed is that I shall regard the three divisions of what is generally called the Eastern Jekany tribe, the Gaajak, Gaajok, and Gaagwang, as separate tribes. In doing this I fully realise the arbitrariness of the usage.

This continual process of segmentation in the tribe is due to the weakening of these bonds upon which the solidarity of primitive groups depends, communal life and kinship. The difficulty of pasturing and watering cattle during the dry season necessitates a sparse population to a large area. The more populous a group becomes the greater becomes this economic problem which can only be solved by its members going further and further afield to exploit more distant pastures and water supplies. This has undoubtedly been one of the causes of Nuer expansion during the last century. The result is that members of a group become less and less into contact with one another the larger it grows and the social and political solidarity of the group is consequently loosened. Thus, the tribe has the minimum of cohesion, while the small village group which lives together in dry and wet seasons is a closely knit community. The cohesion of other territorial groups between the village and the tribe varies in rough proportion to their size. As will be explained later, widening of spacial distance goes hand in hand with widening of distance in blood relationship. For even the bonds of kinship loosen when kin ceases to be localised and begin to spread over a large area, because if kin are to function as economic, social and ceremonial agents they must live together. How else can they pasture their herds in the same plains? How else can they attend the same weddings and mortuary ceremonies? How else can they act together

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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342 Their huts are built with great care and skill. They are
361 cylindrical in form with a conical roof consisting of grass, reeds, or leaves, while the walls are made of mud; and are decidedly superior to the buildings of the Dinka, Anuak, and other kindred tribes. The houses stand in small groups, sometimes only two or three together, the land for cultivation lying immediately around each house.

342 In the dry season the men leave their villages to seek
● 233 better pasture in the swampy regions of the country. Here temporary huts of straw are erected for the young men who look after the cattle and milk them. During the night the cattle are driven into large enclosures of thorny trees; a fire of dried cow-dung is constantly kept smouldering, to protect the cattle from the stings of mosquitoes. When the rains begin to fall, about April, the people return to their villages to plant dura.

776 Very little is known about the religion of the Nuer. Miss Huffman mentions on page 56 some names of their gods, but we learn little as to their significance in the lives and beliefs of the people. While I was studying the Shilluk people in the Sudan in 1910, still another Nuer god, viz. Kot, was mentioned to me by a number of Nuer men whom I had with me for some time. This word Kot occurs in a large number of Nilotic languages, its general meaning is 'rain', but in Nuer it designates a god, the idea of this god being evidently connected with that of rain. To Kot is attributed the creation of the world, as the following report dictated to me by a native Nuer shows:[1]

[1] This record and the following ones were, together with the original Nuer text, first published in my study on the Nuer language in the *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen. Afrikanische Studien*, p. 84 ff. Berlin, 1912.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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782 again. In what have we failed?' Then a cow is speared, and the chief continues praying: 'Oh God, take thy cow. And you [dead man] turn away, do not look at us again. We will give you your own things, but then leave us alone.' The wife of the deceased is now given to another male member of his family with these words: 'Bear children by her, that their fire may be raised up [that their family may not be extinguished], and their family may be able to manage their own affairs.'

A prayer by the chief for a woman in travail: 'God, what is it? why can the woman not bear? It is thou who has ordered the woman to bear children, that she may create descendants, that the man's family may be preserved.'

789 An important annual event is the bringing of the cattle across the river, where they find better pasturage. ● 233 For this the help of the sorcerer is sought. He has to find a propitious day for the transaction and to perform the necessary magic rites. He spends the night before in making witchcraft, and the following morning he prays: 'Oh God, it is thou who said that I should be sorcerer, I should do witchcraft, I should bewitch the crocodile. The cattle has no more grass, let the cattle go across the river that they may graze on yonder shore. Oh God, it is thou who created the cow, that man might be nourished by her, let them swim safely across.' When the cows have been brought to the crossing-place, the sorcerer invokes the river or the spirit presiding over the river: 'Thou river of a certain man, let the cattle go across safely, all of them, let them reach the shore safely, let no one be touched by the crocodile. We are making a bargain.' As a ram is brought, he goes on saying: 'Take it, O river!' The ram's mouth is tied, so he goes to the river with it, and drives it into the water. Now the

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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cattle are driven into the boats and they begin rowing them.

These are but a few glimpses into the religious life of the Nuer. The subject requires careful investigation based on a thorough knowledge of the language and can be carried out only by persons who have the confidence of the natives.

It is well worth while to win this confidence and to study the people intimately. They may at first sight not appear attractive and may not generally be inclined to look upon every white man as a higher being, but Miss Huffman is certainly right in saying that they improve on acquaintance; they reveal to him who lives and works among them noble qualities of which this book gives us some fine examples and which justify the labours of those who strive to help them in finding their way from the old, independent, and unfettered existence to changed conditions of life and to a new outlook.

The information given in this book will be welcome to scientists, but even more it will be of value to the growing number both of missionaries and of administrators who are coming into touch with the Neur.

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features characteristic of the areas occupied by the majority of the Nilotes - flatness, heavy clay soil, thick, tall grasses, swamp in the wet season and parched, brown stubble in the dry season. It is an area of true savannah. 133

The influence of environment on Nuer economy is profound. Although cattle form the great interest of the Nuer people, and are important socially as well as economically, horticulture is a necessary part of their economy owing to the prevalence of cattle diseases and the difficulties of obtaining adequate pastures in the dry season. Horticulture and cattle herding are, therefore, the two main economic activities, and together they determine the ecological cycle, as well as the distribution of population, village sites, and also the relationships between the various segments into which the Nuer are divided. 233 241

Nuer villages are situated on elevated ground out of reach of the wet season floods. In the early rains the cattle feed on young shoots near the village but, as the vegetation becomes too rank and the waters rise, the herds have to graze off the short grasses of the village ridges. During the wet season millet and other grains, vegetables and tobacco are grown in the gardens situated behind the homesteads. At the end of the rains, in November, the floods begin to recede. When the tall, tough grasses, which are unsuitable for the cattle to eat, are sufficiently dry they are burned. Since some varieties send up shoots a few days later, the cattle have fresh pasture until the height of the dry season when the water supplies fail in many regions. The Nuer then seek the permanent water-courses and dry-season pastures. When the harvests are finished they move from the villages to the dry-season camps; a period of wandering divides the two periods of stable residence. The dry-season camps are situated on the banks of rivers which do not completely dry up or on the edge of permanent swamps. 233 241 361 132

When the rains begin again in April and May, water and pasture become plentiful and a move is made back to the villages above flood level, in order to prepare the ground for cultivation.

The annual cycle is approximately set out below. It has considerable repercussions on social life and, although local conditions may cause some variation, the principles underlying the annual cycle are the same everywhere in Nuerland. 221

November - December. Youths and girls take cattle to camps while the old people remain in the village to harvest the second millet crop. Fishing camps may be formed on the banks of rivers. When the second harvest is finished the cattle are brought back to eat the millet stalks but as the pasturage becomes exhausted all eventually go to occupy new cattle camps. A period of wandering precedes the final settlement in the camp. 221 361 233 241

January - February. The married people join the youths when they settle in the final camping grounds. Camps get larger and larger as pastures become scarcer and more people join existing camps. Different villages and tribal sections tend to move at about the same time and to visit the same pools so that the sites of the main dry-season camps do not change from year to year. 221 361

221 241 233 *March - April.* When the rains begin the old people return to the village for sowing.

June. The rest of the people follow with the cattle. The move from camp to village is direct, whereas in the move from village to camp there is an intervening period of wandering.

The Nuer year is therefore divided into two parts, consisting of a period in the villages and a period in the camp. This annual transhumance is necessary for the very existence of the Nuer. Rinderpest prevents complete dependence on cattle, so that they must have villages on highlands, with gardens, in order to grow the necessary supplies of grain. Climatic conditions prevent complete reliance on cultivation and the need of fresh pastures and water for the cattle forces them into dry-season camps near permanent supplies.

361 Homesteads may be strung out along sandy ridges with gardens at the back and grazing in front and the location and size of the villages depend on the distribution and extent of the higher ground suitable for cultivation. The direction of the dry-season movements are determined by ecological conditions. Transhumance enhances the importance of units larger than the villages which, for economic reasons, cannot easily maintain a self-sufficient isolation as do the Shilluk, Anuak, Acholi and Lango villages where the emphasis is on cultivation.

ECONOMY

The economic importance of cattle to the Nuer

231 262 Economically, cattle are chiefly important for milk and milk products, such as whey and liquid cheese. We are told that the Nuer value their cows according to the amount of milk they give.

Nuer eat meat boiled and roasted but, although they are particularly fond of it, they do not raise cattle for slaughter. It is considered that people ought not to kill cattle solely for food and, except on sacrificial and special occasions with a ritual aspect, the Nuer refrain from doing so. It is even thought that animals killed specifically for food might curse their owners.

Like other pastoral peoples in East Africa, the Nuer extract blood from the necks of their cattle and use it as a supplementary article of diet in dry season camps. The blood is boiled and taken with porridge as [252] flavouring or is allowed to coagulate into a block which is roasted and then cut in slices.

287 Milk, meat and blood are the food products derived from cattle but the herds also furnish the materials for implements and other necessary articles. Skins are used for sleeping on, for trays, for carrying fuel, making cord for tethering, leather collars for oxen and in making pipes, spears and shields. Tail hairs are used for ornamentation, bones and horns are used for instruments, scrapers and hooters. Cattle dung is used for plastering walls and floors of huts; dried dung is used for fuel and